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THE CHRISTIAN ARMOUR:

IN TEN SERMONS.

BY THE LATE

REV. SAMUEL WALKER, B.A.,

CURATE OF TRURO, IN CORNWALL, AND FORMERLY OF EXETER
COLLEGE, OXFORD;

NOW RE-PUBLISHED (BY PERMISSION),

BY

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BRIEF MEMOIR

OF THE

REV. SAMUEL WALKER.

THIS excellent divine was born at Exeter, December 16, 1714, and was a lineal descendant of the truly pious and learned Dr. Joseph Hall, Bishop of Exeter—his grandfather, Sir Thomas Walker, Knight, having married Mary, only daughter of the Rev. Samuel Hall, A.M., the youngest son of the Bishop. Our author, the youngest of seven children, was educated at the Exeter Grammar School from the age of eight till he was eighteen; when he was entered of Exeter College, Oxford, took his degree of B.A. in 1737, and was ordained in the latter end of that year to the curacy of Dodescomb Leigh, in Devonshire, and subsequently was tutor to the youngest brother of Lord Rolle.

In 1740, he accepted the curacy of Lanlivery, Cornwall, and on the death of the vicar held the living.

until 1746, when he resigned it to the nephew of his patron, and entered upon the curacy of Truro. During this period he was always much esteemed for the decency and regularity of his conduct. His conscience, even at that time, dictated to him the necessity of constant diligence in the public duties of preaching and catechising. Nor did he, destitute as he was of the light and motives which influenced his subsequent conduct, neglect at any season to visit his parishioners, and give them the best counsel and advice he was able. A remarkable instance of his concern for them stands upon record in one of his papers. In the year 1744, being seized with a violent fever, he sent to a neighbouring gentleman, and dictated to him a letter, which, in case of his death, he desired might be transcribed, and given to such of his parishioners as he found neither his preaching nor his private admonitions had wrought any good effect upon, whose names he then desired the gentleman to take down.

Shortly after Mr. Walker entered upon his official duties in the populous town of Truro, where, as well as in most parts of that neighbourhood, and indeed in the kingdom in general, religion was at a low ebb, he felt conscious that he was destitute of something which was of the greatest importance both to himself, and to the large body of people with whose religious instruction he was intrusted. He began to discover that he had hitherto been ignorant of the nature of that salvation described

in the Gospel; inattentive to his own spiritual state, and that of others; and actuated by sensual and selfish motives, instead of those only Christian ones—love to God, and love to man. He immediately applied himself, with diligence and fervent prayer, to the study of the Holy Scriptures; and having thence gained a farther insight into the nature of the spiritual disease under which he and all mankind laboured, he immediately altered the style of his preaching, as related both to the choice of subjects and the manner of his enforcing them;—addressing his hearers, to use the words of Baxter, ‘as a dying preacher, preaching to dying hearers the living truths of the living God.’ Convinced that the Divine testimony was the only sure ground of a Divine faith, he was careful to assert nothing that was not immediately drawn from the word of God, it having become his great aim and study, according to his own expression, ‘to be a good Bible divine.’ And so much was he afraid of leading others into a blind submission to his judgment, that it was now always a part of his advice to his hearers, not to give their assent to anything he should tell them, merely because *he* said it; but, in imitation of the noble Bereans, to ‘search the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so,’—that their faith might be built upon the Divine testimony, and not on the authority of man.

Mr. Walker often confessed that when he first undertook the curacy of Truro, his only motive in going

to live in that populous town, in preference to any other place in Cornwall, was the greater resort of company, and that he might take his pleasure at the Assemblies, and particularly in dancing. But no sooner had the vital change—‘from death unto life’—taken place, than a corresponding alteration took place in his conduct. He renounced the vanities of the world, voluntarily encountered the reproaches and opposition of the dissipated and the self-righteous, and succeeded in awakening an anxious inquiry into the way of salvation among his hearers. And as he honoured his Divine Master by a cordial espousal of the truths of the Gospel, and a life strictly correspondent to his sacred profession, so he was highly honoured by Him in being made the instrument of promoting the spiritual welfare of numbers during the course of his ministry. He became the leader in a society of clergymen and laymen, who met for spiritual edification; and was ever ready to communicate advice and instruction to all who solicited it. But while he exhorted them to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, he never omitted pressing upon persons of all conditions and occupations in life, to apply themselves with diligence to their respective callings.

In the spring of 1760, and in the midst of his usefulness, Mr. Walker’s health rapidly declined, and he fell into pulmonary consumption. The waters of Bristol and change of air were prescribed and adopted, but with

little effect. At the invitation of the Earl of Dartmouth, he repaired to Blackheath about Christmas, where he had the opportunity of the best medical advice in London. Here he lingered until Sunday, July 19, 1761, when he expired, in the 47th year of his age, and the 25th of his ministry. Although the curacy of Truro was the whole of his small income, and his expenses were necessarily increased greatly by a long sickness, yet such was the esteem in which he was held by his friends at Truro, and in other parts of the country, that his wants were amply supplied during his illness.

Mr. Walker died in the full enjoyment of the Gospel peace he had so faithfully preached to others. 'I am now enabled,' he said, 'to see when it was that the Lord Jesus first laid effectual hold of my heart, which I was never able to discover before. I have a perfect satisfaction in the principles I have preached, and the methods I have generally taken. I have no doubt respecting my state in Christ, or my future glory. Behold, I am going down to the gates of the grave, and holy angels wait for me. Why do you trouble yourselves, and weep? Cannot you rejoice with me? I am going to heaven. Christ died: my Lord! Oh, had I strength to express myself, I could tell you enough to make your hearts weep for joy. God is all love to me, and my trials are very slight.'

The following letter, written on his deathbed, to

his friend Mr. Conon, was probably the last that he wrote :—


‘My dearest, most faithful friend,—My disorder, though by no means affording the least prospect of recovery, yet seems to affect me at present more with weakness than with that violent heat which rendered me incapable of thought. I can now, blessed be God, think a little; and with what comfort do I both receive your thoughts and communicate mine to you! Oh, my dear friend, what do we owe to the Lord for one another! More than I could have conceived, had not God sent me to die elsewhere. We shall have time to praise the Lord, when we meet in the other world. I stand and look upon that world with an established heart. I see the way prepared, opened, and assured unto me in Jesus Christ. For ever blessed be the name of God, that I can look upon death, that introduces that glorious scene, without any kind of fear. I find my grand duty still is submission, both as to time and circumstances. Why should I not say to you that I find nothing come so near my heart, as the fear lest my will should thwart God’s will in any circumstances? Thus, I think, I am enabled to watch and pray in some poor measure. Well, my dear friend, I am but stepping a little before you. You will soon also get your release, and then we shall triumph for ever in the name, love, and power of the Lamb. Adieu! Yours in the Lord Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.’

THE CHRISTIAN ARMOUR.

SERMON I.

EPHESIANS, VI., 11.

“Put on the whole armour of GOD, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil.”

HE Apostle, in this and the following verse, would make us acquainted with the power, vigilance, and artifice of the enemies of our souls who are under the direction of Satan. These, he would suggest to us, it is no easy matter to oppose or resist; nay, that we shall need the whole armour of God to enable us, in our passage to glory, to fight our way through them. We “wrestle not against flesh and blood;” that is, not only with “flesh and blood,” with the divers lusts of our own corrupted hearts, “but against principalities” also, and “powers, rulers, spiritual wickedness.” We must understand that the various orders of fallen angels are distinguished by these several titles, some of whom,

it is evident, are more mighty than others. This appears from the Book of Daniel, where the angel sent to Daniel says, that "the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood" him; and from the intimation our Lord gives us in these words, "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting;" as, also, by the like various titles given to good angels in the first chapter of this Epistle, who are distinguished much as the evil angels are hereby the names, "principality, power, might, and dominion." As their ranks are various, so their number must be great; for a legion of them had possessed themselves of that poor Gadarene: "My name is Legion: for we are many." A legion was a body of Roman soldiers, consisting, some say, of six thousand; others, of twelve thousand five hundred men. "Wherefore," proceeds the apostle, "having an enemy so mighty, and so numerous, to grapple with, take unto you the whole armour of God, for none other can avail, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day of violent temptation; and having done, or overcome, all, to stand victoriously." He then, in the fourteenth verse and onward, describes the Christian armour, and bids the Christian soldier put it on; namely, sincerity, righteousness, readiness to profess the Gospel, faith, hope, the word, and prayer. To every part he assigns a peculiar use in resisting and opposing the devil; and all this together, without lacking any portion, he calls the Christian's complete armour: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

The passage, you will observe, is addressed, as is the whole Epistle, to the saints at Ephesus, to those who had betaken themselves to Jesus, had forsaken Satan's kingdom, and put themselves under Christ's banner. For these the enemy would be preparing wiles, peculiarly suited for them as soldiers of Christ; and the apostle, on the other hand, suits them with armour wherewith they should be always able to withstand these wiles of Satan. It is but indirectly that the passage can have regard to unbelievers, who are servants of the kingdom of darkness, led along by other wiles than the apostle here suggests are prepared for the soldiers of Christ, and who, fighting under another banner, cannot, in their present state, put on the armour of God, wherein the servants of Jesus stand against the wiles of the devil. This remark makes way for a very important distinction, needful to be observed in handling this subject, which is, that while some are enemies, and some friends to Satan, the wiles which he lays for his enemies are of a different sort from the arts whereby he beguiles those who are in league with him; and, consequently, that the advice which the gospel hath to offer to the enemies of Satan, must be quite of another sort from that which it proposes to such as are led captive of the devil at his will. To keep sinners secure is Satan's business; to awaken them the business of the gospel. To discourage and seduce believers is the devil's endeavour; to comfort and strengthen them, the gospel's. The devil speaks peace to the sinner, and terror to the saint. Christ hath a word of

comfort for the saint, but would make the sinner tremble. And from hence it will be very plain, that when any are at ease, finding no trials nor difficulties in their course, it is a shrewd sign of their being of the kingdom of darkness. "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace;" whereas, on the other hand, mourning by reason of spiritual infirmities, and groaning under the fiery darts of the wicked, must shew that he doth not look upon us as his friends, but treats us as his enemies.

In speaking from the words of the text, it will be needful to treat of the wiles both of the devil, as he opposes the kingdom of CHRIST in unbelievers and believers; and also, of the method which JESUS uses to confound and vanquish him in the one and the other. The subject is large, taking in the whole both of man's salvation, and of the opposition made to it; so that I shall be able to do no more than draw the outlines, and furnish you with some needful observations. In doing which I purpose,

First, To lay down, in a general manner, the state of this spiritual war between Christ and Satan.

Secondly, To enter, more particularly, into the case of unbelievers and believers, as they are either seduced or opposed by the wiles of the devil; together with the relief which the gospel provides for the one and the other.

First, I am to give a general account of the state of this spiritual warfare between Christ and Satan.

That such a war subsists, and is carrying on, is

told us in the text, wherein the armour of God and the wiles of the devil are set in opposition the one to the other. Christ invades Satan's kingdom, arming His servants ; and Satan leaves no art untried to maintain his dominion, and restrain the progress of the Conqueror. When we shall have considered the occasion of the war, the design of the leaders, the seat of action, the manner of their fighting, and the issue of the contest on the one part and the other, the general state of this war will be plainly before us.

I. Of the occasion of the war. This was partly the success of Satan upon our first parents ; and partly God's jealousy for His honour, and His pity for fallen man. The old serpent could not directly take his revenge upon God, and was but too well disposed, therefore, to do it indirectly, by assaying to seduce man from his allegiance to his Maker, and thereby to engage him in that rebellion which himself had conceived against Heaven. His attempt succeeded ; man sinned, and Satan got a footing upon earth against the Almighty. This, as it was peculiarly agreeable to the malice of that revengeful spirit, so his power was not utterly restrained by God, who permitted him to try his arts upon the first man and woman thereby to prove them. It had been easy for God to have shut up Satan in hell, and entirely to have excluded him from the earth. But it was His pleasure that man, as well as angels, should be proved ; and the rage of Satan wanted nothing but not being restrained, to engage him in an attempt to draw man

to sin, however much he might thereby increase his own guilt. Thus sin entered into the world, and Satan (from whom the purposes of God are as much hid as from us) triumphed, no doubt, in the thought, that if he could have no dominion in heaven, yet now he was sure of it on earth. Oh, how must that monster have been confounded, when he heard the word of the promise: The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head. Satan had no sooner a footing, but a contrivance lay hid in the eternal counsels of God to dispossess him by a Redeemer. God would magnify His glory in despite of hell; yea, make the designs of hell serve only more magnificently to glorify it. The eternal Word had taken the matter in hand; and no sooner had Satan succeeded in the fall of Adam, than He began to set Himself to the execution of it, supporting the fallen creature by a promise, and in him all his descendants; which promise also he was able and determined to make good, to the confusion of the devil, and to the destroying of his works. What farther steps he has taken in it, what he is now doing, and what remains still to be effected, I stop not to declare to you. This is the occasion of the war; and you see who the two leaders are, namely, Satan and the Redeemer; which also will make us able to discover—

II. The designs of the one and the other. Satan has lost nothing of the pride, rage, and malice of an apostate spirit, therefore he cannot cease sinning. His revenge and rebellion against

God are implacable; however much he trembles before the Son of God, yet he will not submit to him; his proud malice is nothing abated; he roars against the government of God, seeking whom he may devour. Ceaselessly he labours to defeat the kingdom of the Redeemer, and to set up his own against it. What a spirit is this! How detestably is it manifested! Alas, that we should carry the same rebellious and hellish spirit in our bosoms, and yet be reconciled to it as we are! Christ is Satan's enemy, and his design is to frustrate Christ's purposes if he can. The Redeemer, on the other hand, is come to destroy Satan's kingdom, and thereby to glorify his heavenly Father, and save lost man. This, how easy would it be for him to effect, were but man ready; would we but enter into the design of the Son of God! Oh, how quickly would Satan be cast out, and the honour of God be maintained in a way agreeable to his infinite mercy; for maintained it must and will be, though in a manner not so agreeable to the Divine goodness, when, with their father the devil, sinners shall be cast into hell. How quickly too should we find ourselves in the paradise of God! Let the impenitent sinner consider this. Know you that you are siding with Satan, entering into his designs, opposing the purposes of Jesus Christ, for God's glory and for your salvation. I am persuaded you do not consider your conduct in so awful a light. You hardly think you are fighting under the devil, and supporting his war against Heaven, since you will not take part with the Redeemer.

You do not think it, I know ; Satan takes care to hide that from you. But Christ tells you so plainly, with his own mouth. You are not with Christ, are you ? What ! be on Christ's part, and practise sin ; practise it yourselves, and encourage it in others ! Now, if you are not with Christ, he saith you are against him ; that is, you are with Satan. I wish you would consider this, that you are siding with a friend of hell. It is a part, I imagine, you would neither think it prudent nor proper to take. But,

III. Where is the seat of action ? In our hearts. There the devil has a *natural* right, and thence Christ would dispossess him. Satan, by the fall, both ruined the original purity of man's nature, and also introduced a sad defilement into both the parts of us, soul and body ; rendering the one proud, and the other carnal. To destroy this work of the devil, restoring to us the image of God, taking away our pride, and spiritualizing our affections, is Christ's business. Thus the point is stated in Scripture. Satan's natural dominion in us is thus explained by our Lord :—" How can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods except he first bind the strong man ?" He is said, elsewhere, to have " blinded the minds of them which believe not." He is called " the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience ;" and his kingdom is often termed " darkness," because of that ignorance and security wherein he holds the hearts of his subjects. On the other hand, the kingdom of Christ is said to be " in us ;" and when

it is so, we are called for that reason, "light," and are said to enjoy "liberty;" the prince of this world is said to be "judged," and to be "cast out." My brethren, heaven and hell, Christ and Satan, are continually warring, not only concerning us, but in us. Alas, we are apt enough to busy ourselves about all other wars. How many minds are always anxious about the success of our wars abroad, careful to observe the strength and posture of the enemy, ready to triumph upon any news of victory, or to hang down the head upon the notice or apprehension of a defeat! But the spiritual war, the war within, the war at home in the highest sense, who hath any regard for it? It is much to be feared we are dead in sin, led captive of Satan. Who watches the motions of Satan or of Christ? Who mourns for Satan's victories? Who fears his approaches? Who prepares to meet him? Who puts on the Christian armour? Who appeals to the Captain of Salvation for direction and strength? What madness is this! Were an enemy of men at our doors, were our houses in flames, our friends murdered, our children slain before our faces, should we be amusing ourselves with what is doing at a distance? Look within, look into your hearts; there you will see great devastations, more cruelly exercised upon your souls by the tyrant of hell; there you will see yourselves robbed, plundered, enslaved indeed. Christ would save you, help you, let you free; you know he would; he hath been often at the door of your hearts, pleading and striving with you. But you

will not, you will not open your hearts to him; you are well content with your slavery, too well content to serve Satan; are miserably easy, as if it were not your concern, while every day you are led in triumph by the prince of darkness, and he insolently boasts of you as his, before ministering angels and insulting devils.

IV. Let us consider the manner of the fight. The weapons of Satan are carnal; those of Christ, spiritual. Those of Satan are worldly things, whereby he endeavours to gratify pride, or to nurse indulgence. By these his business is to keep the soul in security and thoughtlessness, to ward off the suggestions of conscience, and by the continual engagements of pleasure, care, and reputation, to amuse the soul, that it shall have no more leisure than inclination to reflect on its real interests. He seems to have free access to the spirits of those who are under the protection of the Redeemer; and they well know, would they but speak, how artfully he keeps their minds employed by one vain thing or another of this world; how he either entertains them with pleasing thoughts of their abilities, sense, knowledge, wealth, and of the esteem which those things have gained them with others; or leads them on in prospects of indulgence, company, entertainments; or keeps them employed by carefulness, the hope of getting, the fear of losing, the perplexity of disappointment. Would they speak, they would own that he allows them no time for a serious thought, or when it presses in upon them, hath a

thousand ways to snatch it away. This is his method with the miserable children of this world ; he deals smoothly with them, contrives to keep them in peace in their sins, while they live without God in the world. Let them be called Christians, it is all one to him so they be his slaves.

Will you but take their word for it, they are the happiest men under the sun ; nay, they are ready to pity those who claim the liberty of their reason, and who have either conscience or courage enough to fear God. Such power hath the deceiver. But doth any one of them betake himself to Jesus, turning from his evil ways, oh ! how quickly doth this lamb become a lion. Then what fears, what apprehensions, what fiery darts, what misgivings, and despairing suggestions doth he pour in upon them ? Yea, and all their life after, how doth he haunt them, watching all occasions, and but too often prevailing, by some accursed bait or other, saying to them continually, " This will I give thee "—this esteem of men, this wealth of the world ; or, trying to puff them up with the conceit of their own sufficiency, saying, " Ye are become as gods." Thus Satan wars, but with such artifice, and with such an endless number of contrivances, that it is no easy matter to discover or relate them. Yet it must be observed of all of them, that from one end to the other, it is all a lie, for he is the father of lies. The hope of this world wherewith he deludes the sinner, is all a lie. So the poor creature finds it, and yet alas, believes him still.

The artifices wherewith he tries to alarm the servant of Jesus are a lie too, yet he also in his turn is too apt to credit him.

Jesus, on the other hand, comes with the word of truth, and the power of the Spirit. These are the weapons He uses. He lays the truth home to the sinner's conscience, and says, so as to be felt, "Unless thou repent, thou shalt perish;" "Return, why wilt thou die, when I have died for thee?" He brings forth the promise, and displays it in all its lovely consequences in time and eternity. He assays to win the heart by it, and possesses the soul with gracious motions of the Spirit to lay hold of it. The word is Christ's weapon, impressed and brought home by the Spirit. The world is the devil's principal engine, represented to the soul in all the appearances of happiness, wherein his artifices can dress it. Our hearts are the scene of action; for them they contend, on the one part and the other. It behoves us to consider well to which of them we yield ourselves servants to obey. Is it to Christ, or to Satan? Is it the word or the world that judges us? Are we led by the Spirit of God, or the spirit of darkness? I must believe that the conscience of every sinner among you hath answered him already, however the doubting Christian may be questioning upon it. To conclude this general account I need only observe,

V. In the last place, the issue of this war, on the one part and the other. This will be the triumph of the Redeemer, and the confusion of the adversary. This is a truth as comfortable to

some, as terrible to others. The Lion of the tribe of Judah must prevail; the prince of this world is judged, is cast out. See, a thousand devils fled before Him at a word in the days of His humiliation; how then will the whole host of them stand in the day of His glory! He will trample them under His feet, He will shut them up in everlasting darkness, and all their followers among men with them.

Illustrious day! Then the glory of God shall shine forth. Then it shall be found to have lost nothing by all the sin which Satan hath devised upon the face of the earth. Lift up your heads, believers; your victorious Leader hath seen Satan like lightning fall from heaven; and you also shall soon see it; you shall see your God glorified, your Redeemer exalted, the accuser cast out. The issue of the war will be to his eternal shame; before the assembled worlds he shall own the might of the Son of God. Even now he flies at the name of Jesus; in the might of Jesus he flies before the weakest saint.

I have set before you a war which is always subsisting, and to which we are all parties, on the one side or the other; and that a war of such importance that all the powers of heaven and hell are engaged in it, while our hearts are the field of battle. And what shall I say upon the whole of it? Will you that God be glorified, Jesus prevail, and Satan defeated? If so, give your hearts to the Redeemer, and heartily engage in His cause. He hath work for you to do, while so many are

under the banner of Satan. But you must be with Him entirely, otherwise you are with Satan. It signifies nothing that you call yourselves after His name, and make a show of being with Him ; this will never pull down the kingdom of the enemy. You must enter into His designs, and fight manfully under His banner against sin, the world, and the devil, to the glory of your God, and the salvation of your own soul. Eternal shame will be the issue of your betraying or forsaking Christ. He will prevail over you. If you will cleave to the prince of darkness, endless and eternal darkness must be your lot, when Christ shall glorify Himself on your leader and you.

But are you escaped ? are you fighting under the banner of Jesus, and manfully striving in His Spirit to pull down the kingdom of darkness ? O, rejoice in your glorious liberty wherewith Christ hath set you free, and “ show forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light ; and pray always for the renewing influences of his powerful grace in your hearts, that the works of Satan may be defeated from day to day, and you become more shining proofs of the Redeemer’s might, and more successful instruments in His hand, and yourselves be higher advanced in His kingdom of grace here, and so finally in His kingdom of glory hereafter. Even so Thy kingdom come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

SERMON II.

EPHESIANS VI., 11.

“Put on the whole armour of GOD, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil.”



OPENED to you the context in the former discourse ; and after having remarked, that though the passage was immediately directed to believers, in the persons of the saints of Ephesus, I showed that it would be advisable to give the subject a larger scope, and to take in the whole case of that war which is maintaining upon earth, between Christ and the powers of darkness. The subject was introduced by a general account of the state of that conflict. The seat of action was then described to be our hearts, in which Satan was to hold dominion over us, and Christ to dispossess him. The manner of warring, on the one part and the other, was also shewn, and the whole was wound up with an intimation of the issue of the war. I now call on you everyone to hearken, while I describe the wiles wherewith the devil labours to hold the sinner in subjection, and to seduce the saint ; and the methods which the Redeemer uses to bring in the one, and

to establish the other. This, you may remember, was the second thing proposed.

In speaking of it, it will be necessary to consider distinctly both the cases, that is to say,

I. With what wiles the devil labours to enthrall the sinner, and what means Christ uses to gain him. Here you will see the Redeemer makes the attack, and Satan is upon the defensive.

II. What wiles Satan employs against Christ's servants, and how the Redeemer enables them to resist; and here the assault comes from Satan, and to succour and defend is the part of the Redeemer.

I. We are to consider the method of Christ's assault upon the kingdom of Satan in the heart of a sinner, in order to gain him out of the enemy's hand; and also the wiles which the devil uses to disappoint the Redeemer's attempt, and to keep the sinner in his service.

While I am opening this point, it will be evidently seen, how the devil wars at all disadvantage; that he must set up falsehood against truth, and temporal against eternal motives; that he cannot foretel the issue of one step he takes, while all his steps are plainly seen and foreseen, in all their consequences, by the Redeemer; that while Satan hath not the least power or strength to oppose one motion of His, He can easily turn all the counsels of Satan back upon himself; in a word, that in respect of Jesus, Satan is a poor, blind, weak, insignificant enemy. What then gives him so much success? It is neither his power, vigilance, nor cunning; what are these in respect

of the might, care, and wisdom of the Redeemer? No, sinners, it is your wilfulness; it is this alone gives him advantage. Ye will not hearken to the Redeemer—ye will hearken to the wiles of the devil.

Now, that I may plainly set before you the method of Christ's attack upon Satan in the heart of a sinner, and Satan's devices to disappoint the success of it, you must be shown the state wherein Christ finds the sinner; his methods with him; and Satan's counterplot to defeat them.

1. The state wherein Christ finds the sinner. And I fear it is the state of too many among you, notwithstanding all the endeavours he has long used with you.

He finds the sinner in sin; committing sin, that is, practising it; the "servant of sin," of his sinful lusts, which his main concern is to gratify and indulge; "dead in sin"—his views, designs, and pursuits so altogether for the gratification of his pride and pleasure, in the possession and enjoyment of earthly things, that he is just as much without feeling with regard to God's will and his own spiritual interests, as a dead man is to the day, to heat and cold, hunger and thirst, pain and nakedness. "He doth not righteousness," saith St. John; dislikes, turns from, and neglects religion, with which he seems to have no concern, and the very thoughts or mention of which is disagreeable to him; that is, of true religion, a life of faith and heavenly-mindedness, of deadness to the world, and self-denial. "He doth not righteousness;" he

commits sin ; he hates godliness in his heart, and neglects it in his life ; he hearkens to his perverse inclinations, which are in their very nature "earthly, sensual, devilish." His daily study is to gratify them, giving himself up to the pursuits of indulgence, excess, gluttony, ease, pleasure, amusements, honour, wealth, grandeur, as his particular turn is. Consequently, the apostle adds, he "loveth not his brother ;" is selfish, affects his own interest, ease, pleasure, honour, and reputation, in everything he does, and is proud, impatient, wilful. Instead of loving true Christians for God and Christ's sake, he despises, hates, and persecutes them. Such a one, to sum up his character, St. John insists, "is of the devil ;" his conduct is pleasing and agreeable to the devil ; he belongs to the party, interest, and kingdom of the devil.

Finding him thus in sin, he also finds him either in *security* or *delusion*. In security perhaps, led along the very captive of Satan. That god of this world, it may be, by the things of this world, hath so blinded his eyes, that he doth not see God at his right hand, the mercy that calls to him, the death that stands directly before his face, the terrors of the grave, judgment, hell, that wait for, that threaten him ; and because he is blind, therefore he is easy as a little child, who, because he shuts his eyes, seems to think himself out of danger. Such was the case of the fool in the parable, who was for pulling down his barns, and building others more capable of holding his goods, saying, in the security of his heart, "Soul, thou hast much goods

laid up for many years ; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Or, if not hardened in security, he is found under delusion, either stifling the remonstrances of conscience in company, pleasure, care ; or giving the warning voice Felix's answer, "Go thy way for this time ; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee ;" or, with the Pharisee in the temple, living under the guidance of a blind conscience, resting upon the outward forms of godliness, or deluded by the feelings of a tender heart, and the liberalities of an open hand toward the afflicted and distressed.

However it may be, Christ finds him in sin, and therefore in a state than which nothing upon earth can be so dishonourable, and ungrateful to God, who says, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." Nor is anything so dangerous to the poor sinner himself ; "the wrath of God abideth on him." Nothing is so pleasing to the prince of darkness, who in such a case, like a "strong man armed, keepeth his palace, and his goods are in peace." Alas ! it is a case over which hell may rejoice, while heaven cannot but pity it. This Satan knows ; he knows Jesus of Nazareth, knows his power and his love. In the midst of his triumph the devil cannot but tremble lest this stronger than he should come upon him. He hastens to make sure of his captive, driving him faster into sin, and entangling him in so many engagements of this world, such a custom of practising iniquity, so many difficulties of shame, interest, reputation, that his escape is as

hard as for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. Sometimes, indeed, this great deceiver seems to make too much haste, and driving furiously, doth thereby give occasion to the recovery of a sinner. Nevertheless, we do not find many such cases in Scripture. We read there of a Manasseh, a Paul, a Magdalene, plucked as brands out of the burning ; but, as far as we can judge from that history, Satan is but too successful with those that have been long practised in sin, and those that are filthy we have cause to fear will be filthy still. Oh ! that the experience of our times could contradict the truth of this observation ; but amidst the much talking and the many resolutions about repentance, how little of it exists !

You now see the state wherein Christ finds the sinner—committing sin, an enemy to God, godliness, and godly men, either hardened in security, or cheated by appearances and resolutions ; but in the mean time, a slave to Satan, a reproach to his Maker, an alien from the hope of heaven, and an heir of hell. Well, my brethren, are there none such amongst you ? Oh ! that I could be sure there were none. But I can be sure of no such thing. While idleness and debauchery, covetousness and profaneness, sabbath-breaking and neglect of appointed ordinances, are found among you, there must be persons of this character, and in this wretched condition. Whoever you are, doth not conscience say, I am the man you have been describing to me ? Oh that I could speak home to your hearts, and make you feel the state you are

in. God is my witness, I cannot endure to see you led away by Satan to destruction. He knows I am not without concern for you. But what is the pity of man? Jesus pities you, and is ready to help, relieve, and save you, if you will but suffer Him. It is He who hath sent us to you. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." It is your own fault alone if you are not delivered, for He complains of you with His own mouth: "Ye will not come to me, that ye may have life." Hear, I request you, my second point, and then say, if you are not sure in your consciences, that it is solely your own fault you are yet in sin.

2. I am now to show you the methods Christ uses with the heart of the sinner, in order to dispossess Satan of his dominion over it. The weapons of Christ in this spiritual war, I have before observ'd, are the word and Spirit; that is, the Spirit working by the word, and impressing the various motives which the word contains effectually upon the heart. Christ speaks by the word to the ear, and by the Spirit to the heart. Not but that He hath many indirect ways whereby, through the Spirit, to bring home what is contained in the Scriptures to the hearts of men. Such are His providences, judgments, afflictions, the examples of good men, and perhaps of bad men, and the like. But then, all these are but the means, whereby He impresses on our minds those arguments which are contained in the Scriptures. Still it is the threat and the promise which God hath made in His word that does the work, by the operation of the

Spirit. The most ordinary method is the word preached, wherewith, as with a sword, (for to this the word is compared in the verses following the text,) he cuts asunder the hearts of dead sinners, and cuts down all the cheating lies of Satan, whereby he lies in wait to beguile believers.

Now, in ministering the word to the heart of a dead, deluded sinner, Christ doth not work merely in a way of moral persuasion, suggesting to him the unfitness, impropriety, and unreasonableness of his conduct. This, however true, would little avail to his rescue. No; he must be told the plain truth, and the whole of it; that God is a jealous majesty, and a "consuming fire;" that "the wages of sin is death;" that "the wrath of God," in all its eternal terrors, "is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;" that "the axe is laid to the root of the tree," and that "every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire" of God's everlasting wrath; and that there is but one alternative left—to repent, or to perish. This is Christ's first argument, which hath, at one time and another, been brought so close home upon the heart of every sinner among you, that he ought to have felt and trembled under it. When the devil speaks, he "speaketh a lie, for he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it;" yea, and the sinner himself knows that he is believing a lie when he hearkens to it. But when Christ speaks, the sinner's heart witnesses the truth of what he says. When he speaks to the heart of the

sinner, the truth is felt there, the awful terrors of the Lord are acknowledged, the old security and delusion are shaken, and the enemy begins to fear lest his dominion should fall. Oh, what resolutions, purposes, designs, immediately ensue! What amazement upon the sight of the precipice of hell, over which the sinner hath so long slept! What eager hopes that things will be better! We have seen a great deal of this, and yet how little has come of it; often nothing to the purpose; only perhaps a certain gnawing of the conscience afterwards which doth not suffer sin to sit so easy as it did before.

I appeal to your consciences, sinners, if you have not known such seasons as these; and possibly you have never been well at your ease since. Satan could never quiet you as before. Now, had you improved such convictions, could you have been slaves of Satan as you still are? Would you not have been long ago rejoicing in the liberty wherewith Christ would have set you free? Nor think your case the better, if the terrors of the Lord do not now move you as once they were wont to do. Truly this will prove you desperately the worse. I could have better hope of a heathen than of such a one. This would but prove you more hardened, God more provoked to take His Spirit from you, and Satan to have a more absolute mastery over you. But such seasons you have known, whatever you know now; and this, at least, proves Christ's power, and his willingness to save you out of the hand of the enemy. O, con-

sider how you shall answer this before Him in judgment, that you refused His counsels, and would not hearken to His reproof. O, if you feel any concern about your sins and God's wrath now, hearken to it; it is not too late. Yet Christ knocks; it is His call, and if you will but open to Him, all shall be well with you for ever.

This is Christ's first argument to the sinner's heart, in order to dispossess it of the tyranny of the devil; and if there be anything terrible in the wrath of the Almighty, and in the everlasting fire of hell, you see how mighty a one it is. Indeed, so mighty, that all the artifices of the deceiver would prove as weak as his power to overturn it, were but the sinner faithful to himself. Lay it not upon the devil, the fault is your own, you will not be saved; so shall you find it at last, if you persist in your impenitency. But after this, and perhaps with this, Christ mixes the promise. Indeed, the promise implied in the word, "Except ye repent ye shall perish," is as much as to say, If ye do repent your sins shall be forgiven. So the apostles and ministers are commanded to preach, namely, Repentance and remission of sins in the name of Christ. When the declarations of wrath have alarmed and roused the sinner, and he stands trembling before his God, and asking what he shall do to be saved, then the word speaks comfortably to him, and Christ hath declarations of mercy whereby to support him, and draw him over to God. Wrath sounds the alarm, but mercy does the work, converts the heart, and brings the sin-

ner out of darkness into light. God gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins, Rom. iii. 25 ; how mightily do these words work upon the heart of a truly convinced sinner ! But I cannot stop to enlarge. He that indeed is brought low in the sense of his vileness, knows the force of the promise of mercy ; and he that is not, can have no manner of apprehension about it. It is more to my purpose to observe, that by these two, (the threatenings and the promise), Christ assaults the kingdom of Satan, and will destroy the works of the devil in the heart of every sinner among you, unless ye be wanting to yourselves. By these, he hath, and doth, and will come upon him, overcome him, take away his armour wherein he trusted, and divide his spoils.

I conclude with three short improvements from what hath been said.

(1.) Those who have been brought from the power of Satan unto God, must never forget how great a thing the Lord hath done for them already. It must be their pleasing employment to remember how with a high hand the Redeemer rescued them ; what they were, how he pitied them, how he wounded and healed them, how he kept them safely, bore with them, and taught them to go. The various steps of their deliverance should be recorded upon their hearts, that they may more abundantly show forth the praise of that redeeming grace and love, whereby they have been brought into their present glorious liberty.

(2). Let none talk of mercy, as if they had

the least pretence to it, who yet practise sin. For "he that committeth sin is of the devil," still of the devil's kingdom; and the mercy of God is not granted to him. The great end Christ hath in view in His endeavours with us, is to glorify His Father, by bringing us back to Him. Hereto His threatenings and His promises tend; and if this be not effected, His end is not answered, and there is no more promise of forgiveness with them, than there is possibility of happiness in them. O, talk no more of mercy while ye are yet the slaves of sin.

(3). Let those upon whom the threatenings and promises have not had an effect to any purpose, seriously consider that they shall never be dealt with any other way. Christ has no more to say, than to persuade them by the terrors of the Lord, and to invite them by His promises. You may expect no new messages, no new arguments. These are the best, the strongest. And if neither the outstretched arm of an avenging God, the awful solemnities of the judgment day, the damnation of hell, nor the groans of a dying Saviour, the free offer of pardon, reconciliation, and adoption, and the glories of an eternal world, can move you, you must even die in your sins, from which the Lord, of His mercy, deliver you.

SERMON III.

EPHESIANS, VI., 11.

“Put on the whole armour of GOD, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil.”



AFTER an introductory discourse, wherein the nature and importance of the war carrying on upon earth between Christ and Satan was laid open, two general points were proposed from these words.

I. It was proposed to show what methods Christ uses to pluck sinners out of the hands of Satan, and also by what arts the devil labours to detain them in his service. Here the Redeemer makes the attack, and Satan is on the defensive.

II. What wiles Satan uses against Christ's servants, and how the Redeemer makes them able to resist. Here the assault comes from the prince of darkness, and to succour and defend is the part of Christ.

In speaking to the former, namely, the method of the Redeemer's attack upon Satan in the heart of a sinner, and Satan's devices to disappoint the success of it, these three things were needful to be insisted on :

1. The state in which Christ finds the sinner.
2. His methods with him.
3. Satan's counterplot to defeat them.

1. Christ finds the servants of Satan employed in their master's business, practising sin; that is, neglecting the ways of godliness; though taken up more or less, perhaps, with the outward show of religion; but following the devices and desires of their own natural hearts, and living either a proud and ambitious, or a worldly and careless, or a luxurious, or a debauched, or an idle life; as the particular turn of each may be. They are, probably, also quite at ease and secure, as if all were well, as if because they feared nothing, there was really nothing to fear; or if there arise some remonstrances of conscience, and secret tremblings at seasons, yet these are without any effect.

2. When Christ comes to any one of these, in order to rescue him from the power of the devil, it is with the threatenings and promises of the word; the one to alarm his fear, the other to constrain his heart; impressing upon the sinner first the one, and then the other, by the operations of the Spirit. So far as this Christ hath gone with you all, with the very worst of you. He hath made your hearts tremble through the declaration of approaching wrath; and you have been already persuaded that there was mercy for you if you would but accept it. So far, I say, Christ hath gone with you all; and farther He would have gone, had you suffered Him; but you chose rather the counsels of the devil, would not part with your companions, your

pleasures, your places of idle resort ; and so Satan prevailed, and Jesus was rejected. I know you make small account of such matters now ; it seems a light thing to many of you, that ye have rejected the counsel of God against your own souls, and returned to your vomit again, committing "unclean-ness with greediness." Your conduct shows how you despise the gracious call of God your Saviour, which ye have wilfully rejected. But a day will come, sinners, when at a loss to seek for any other excuse, ye shall say to this despised Jesus, "Thou hast prophesied in our streets ;" and He will answer, "Depart from me, I know you not." Then it will be his turn to reject ; and then sure I am you shall be sorry. But how is it that Satan hath contrived to deceive you, and render fruitless the endeavours of Jesus upon you ? Under God, it may be of use to show you this.

3. This is what I am now to set forth, namely, Satan's wiles to disappoint the convictions which the Redeemer, by the word and Spirit, hath made upon the heart of a sinner.

Now, on such occasions, that the devil is diligently and artfully practising with the sinner, and is secretly working at the bottom of all those means, whereby multitudes are seen to lose the serious convictions which have been made upon their hearts, is plain from the words of our Lord, accounting for this very thing, in the parable of the sower. "Those by the way side," saith he, "are they that hear ; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should

believe and be saved." Hence it is evident, that his great aim is to prevent sinners from believing and being saved. Such is his malice. And since there is no other way of our being saved, but by believing, that is, by having the heart influenced by the motives contained in the word, his business is, as soon as ever these begin to work in the heart, to catch away the word, to draw off the attention from it, and by divers arts to lessen the impression it had made, till the whole influence of it be departed. What these arts of his are upon awakening sinners we are now more distinctly to consider. And in my doing this, all among you who are yet in your sins, will, I doubt not, find your cases described, and how Satan hath rendered the convictions of the word and Spirit ineffectual upon you. And you will discover, withal, how he manages all these his arts, according to the various circumstances and constitutions of sinners.

(1.) He may try to catch away the word of conviction by exciting presumption. If the constitution be warm, and a man is naturally bold and hardy, (not as many others are, apt to fear in any great undertaking,) when the Spirit hath begun to awaken the soul, by the terrors of the Lord, to a strong desire of fleeing from the wrath to come, the work of religion will, of course, seem not so difficult a thing as it is spoken of. Satan then will correspond with these views. The sinner shall seem to himself as if he had already overcome. It shall appear as nothing to him to forsake his customary sins, to leave his ill companions, to be immoveable

to all their solicitations and jests; to renounce all and follow Christ in the ways of religion, seeking only the care of the soul and a part in eternal life. He shall be a perfect Goliath in his own conceit, and defy all the armies of sin. In this self-confidence the adversary will contentedly let him go forth, will flee before him for a season, and congratulate his mind upon the victories he hath obtained. He begins now to conceive a good hope concerning his state; Satan cries, "Peace, peace," to his soul; and his fear of God's judgments departs before there is any saving work done in his heart. When the great motive which before wrought in him an apprehension of God's wrath, is removed, and he feels as if now there were no concern with it, because supposedly got into a good state; and there being no real principle of faith wrought into the heart, nor anything left to influence the conduct, now it is that the devil hath gained his point, and hath caught away the word from the heart. Then all the resoluteness of this boaster dies away, his eyes close again, and insensibly he falls into his old courses, whereof he now no longer sees the sin, or considers the danger.

In this case it is plain the sinner is nothing humbled, though something frightened by the apprehensions of God's wrath. He was enough alarmed to put the pride of his stout heart working to undertake somewhat for his safety. But it is all the wrong way; he mistakes his work as much as his strength. Fancying outward reformation to be real godliness, (for he can see nothing else as

yet that he has to do, being blinded by the pride of his unhumbed heart,) he goes forth to attempt that which could not profit him should he attain it, but which, nevertheless, he hardly comes up to.

The fall of so many wherever the gospel is preached, through the deceit of the heart, and and wiles of Satan, is greatly to be lamented. It should warn us all to walk more humbly, searching out our sins, together with the blindness and insufficiency of our natural hearts. God "gives grace to the humble," and to them only; "the proud he beholdeth afar off." These do not conceive they want, and so cannot seek his strength. The advice to be offered to all sinners when their eyes begin to open, is, to beware of resolutions concerning what they will do, and to set themselves seriously to search out what they have done. To look into the heart, to search out the principles of sin, which dwell and have ruled there—this is the sure way of improving the impressions made upon the soul, of bringing sinners to a true discovery of their own vileness and weakness, and consequently engaging them to sue for the righteousness and strength of the Redeemer, whereby they are freed from the dominion of the devil.

(2.) Another sort of awakened sinners may be as continually fearful, as these we have been speaking of are bold and hardy. When such are awakened, the enemy, most likely, will be working with them to make them discouraged, and to harass them with fears till they yield. With these he magnifies everything, and swells up mole-hills to

mountains in their apprehension. Whenever they think of stirring a foot, he puts some terrible difficulty in their way, which they have no heart to encounter, till, while he prevails upon them to delay for the present, the gracious impression dies away upon their hearts. I doubt not this hath been the case with many of you who are still far from God. At one time and another, you have been made to see the misery and danger of your condition, and to feel an earnest concern about your soul's salvation. Then the good Spirit of God was working with you; then it was peculiarly a day of salvation. You wished you were Christians indeed; you almost were persuaded to become so, but you were afraid. What would your companions think of you? How would you be able to look them in the face, and bear their reproach? You must not be peculiar. You wished religion were the fashion; then how gladly would you be religious. But as the world now goes, you would be pointed at by every one; your friends would have no regard for you; perhaps they would be angry with you; and you might hurt your interest as well as your character, in the world. So you hesitated; you had no courage to go forward; you would think of it over again, or would wait some more favourable opportunity when you imagined those difficulties would be removed. Meantime, while you were deliberating, the arguments for religion sensibly decayed, and left the work unattempted. This is a very common and successful wile of the devil, to keep those in his

service whom Christ calls to come out of it. I can make no question that some among you have been saying in your hearts, while I have been speaking of it, I am the man ; I was afraid of the world, and one thing and another, and I hid myself ; yea, and I am still afraid. I would be a Christian, but I dare not. But hear what Christ says, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." Nevertheless, your fears never went so high as this about the matter : yet hear what he adds, "I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear : Fear Him, which after He hath killed, hath power to cast into hell ; yea I say unto you, Fear Him." Yet it is plain, in your case, you feared man more than God. Had a greater fear of the wrath to come possessed you, worldly fears would have fallen before it. But while the enemy amazed you with worldly fears, being convinced that for the present you had no strength to break through them, he artfully beguiled you of that little fear of God's judgments which had seized your souls. 'That fear of God's wrath should have been improved ; you should have sought out your sins, and considered your danger, till you found your heart earnestly crying after Jesus for mercy and forgiveness. Then both your fear about worldly consequences would have been swallowed up in the more important anxiety you would have felt concerning your everlasting interests ; and also Christ would have given you power over these worldly fears of your heart. You did not humble yourselves ; and so Satan, taking ad-

vantage of the pride of your heart, (for all these worldly fears are but the working of pride, as it regards present reputation and interest,) dismayed you, and suppressed the strivings of the Spirit in you.

Once more, therefore, be assured, that there is a God that judgeth the earth; a mighty God and a terrible, that can destroy you, both soul and body, in hell. Why do not you fear Him? Why do not you tremble at Him? Have you not sinned against Him? Do not your consciences tell you that He is not reconciled to you? How can He be so to any one that practises sin as you do? And what! are you able to dwell with everlasting burnings? Would God you would be prevailed upon to lay to heart your manifold sins, and God's approaching wrath, both of which are as certain as that you are living men. Then you would not be easy in your present state; you would hear the blessed news of salvation joyfully, would betake yourselves to Jesus, and neither the wiles of Satan, nor the now formidable fears of this world, would be able to stop you from being true disciples of Christ. But,

(3.) If the enemy cannot prevail by means of presumption or fear, he will endeavour, by the pleasures or cares of the world, to catch away the impression which Christ has made upon the sinner's heart, by the word and Spirit. These are his subtle devices against the soul of a sinner. When there are some stirrings of infelt concern about the judgment and wrath to come, the devil knows how

to make advantage of worldly pleasure and care, upon those whom he hath held in subjection by the love of the one or the other. He can plead that pleasure is harmless, and care is needful, till, by the entertainment of the one, and solicitude of the other, the gracious conviction is done away.

With regard to pleasure, the deceiver will suggest there is no harm in it. I pray you mark this lying Satan. What! is there no harm in it? Observe, there is no harm in recreation or relaxation, which is innocent in itself. That is the first qualification; and I believe the greater part of what are called innocent amusements are far from being so. Then recreations, in order to be harmless, must not only be innocent, they must not be abused; that is the second qualification. But they are abused if they are hurtful to our own souls, by engaging our affections to them, or by spending more than a very little time in them; or if they are hurtful to the souls of others, by encouraging them in a vain, idle, ungodly life. Thus there is harm in them, if they be sinful in themselves; if the heart be any how set upon them; if they engage our time, breaking in upon the offices of religion, our calling, and charity. Now, therefore, as the devil's manner is, there is some truth, and a great deal of falsehood, in this suggestion. Because there is no harm in recreations under proper circumstances, therefore he infers that there is not any under whatever circumstances. Now, the misery is, that when such as have had their hearts long enslaved by the love of

pleasure, and in whom therefore pleasure is so far from being harmless, that it is, in truth, the very thing by which they principally commit sin, are awakened to any concern about their souls, the devil taking advantage of their love of pleasure, presents it to them with all the allurements of gratification, and all the harmlessness of innocence. He must needs persuade them that they will not be hurt by it; and they, but too much inclined to believe him, follow his counsel, and go forward in the wonted round of amusement, idleness, and company, till the impression is worn off, and they, perhaps, forget themselves as much as they had done before. But is there any such thing as a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God in the world? Doubtless there is, else the Scripture had not said it. And who is that person? Methinks it is no difficult matter to determine, that this must be the very person who, being warned to flee from the wrath to come, could contentedly do it were it not that a certain way of life must be renounced; that certain gratifications must be forsaken, and forsaken for this reason, that they perpetually extinguish those serious impressions which, by the grace of God, are made upon the heart.

Not altogether unlike this, is the matter of worldly care. Because to be diligent in our calling is our duty, therefore to be careful, that is, anxious, covetous, worldly, is nothing amiss. This is the devil's suggestion to the worldly heart, whenever the power of the Spirit begins to work upon it. Such people are alarmed at the declaration of

God's wrath against impenitent sinners. Why so ? Because they cannot find in themselves the true marks of a penitent state. But the enemy is as willing as they to hide the great sore of their souls. They do not or will not, suspect that they love this present world ; and when they have some awakened concern about the terrors of the Lord working in them, returning as they do to their worldly business, they carry a worldly heart along with them ; and then how soon do the cares of this world choke the word ! I would not be mistaken ; I am as great an enemy to idleness on any pretence, and an advocate for diligence in our temporal business, as any man in the world. But I must speak against worldliness, a love of this present world, because I am sure it is directly contrary to the law of God ; and because I am told by our Master, that we cannot serve God and mammon. If we love the one, we must hate, yea even despise, the other. I am also assured by the same infallible Witness, that this quenches the good motions of the Spirit, and keeps many in subjection to the prince of darkness. From this head you will easily remark, that the great stronghold of Satan is the love of sin in the hearts of sinners. What are the enjoyments of pleasure in any kind ? What is the possession of this world, in comparison of the joy set before us ? Or, what is the denial of any of those things, in respect of that suffering which indulging ourselves in them must bring us to ? It is plain the heart must be desperately fond of them, since it will not

even care to part with them, though affrighted by all the terrors of the Lord, and allured by all the promises of endless glory. The love of sin is Satan's stronghold; and it is by means of our being unwilling to part with what we have long indulged our hearts in, that the devil so readily persuades us, and gets advantage of us, even when we are under the strong impressions and calls of the Spirit. Sinners, you have often trembled at the thought of hell, yet all was not enough to make you willing to leave your sins, so deeply is the love of them rooted in your hearts. This is the ground of that assertion of the prophet, verified by daily experience: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." Jer. xiii. 23.

(4.) The last wile of the devil to keep the awakened sinner for his service, is an attempt to detain him from the throne of grace. If he fails here he loses most assuredly his subject; if he succeeds, whatever the apprehensions, hopes, or purposes of the sinner may be, yet they will be soon over. For proof of this I appeal to the word of God, where we are not only told that if we ask we shall receive, but also that we desire and have not, because we ask not—Matt. vii. 8; James iv. 3. I appeal to every soul here present—when we really and heartily ask in the name of Christ, do we not receive? When the sinner was alarmed, did he begin to cry, and did not God hear? As long as he prayed, did not a serious concern about his

soul's salvation remain, yea, even increase? As soon as he left prayer, did it not decay? Also, I appeal to the many difficulties and objections which have been raised against private prayer in all manner of persons, young beginners especially. That it was needless or fruitless to pray; that it was too soon or too late, with a thousand contrivances to seduce the mind from attending to it, even when employed in it. It is easy to see whose interest it is to raise so many objections to prayer, and who shall gain by it if it be given over. Now, therefore, sinners, since you see and know, that if you persevere in prayer, you shall obtain grace to help, but if you faint you give place to the devil; and since you know this latter truth, at least I doubt not by your own experience, I earnestly beseech you, as you hope to escape the wrath to come, continue instant in prayer. If you have but ever so little concern about your souls, go and pray as earnestly as you can; if you have ever so many difficulties, fears, and temptations to break through in the way to life, only pray. If Satan be too strong for you, as no doubt he is; if you are entangled in heart by ever so much love of sin; if you are unhumbled, proud, impenitent, whatever your case may be, pray. Pray without ceasing; you will certainly see a happy issue to your spiritual interests. But if you fail here, you give all over, you even give up your souls. Oh, how will you be grieved upon your dying beds if you shall not have followed my advice when you shall be just about to die in your sins! It is not

unlikely you may then remember what I now say to you.

I have now opened to you some of the principal contrivances of the devil, whereby he labours to defeat the Redeemer's attempt upon the hearts of sinners to dispossess Satan of them ; and in doing this may have suggested some hints useful to all sorts of people. My next application is to those who are fighting under Christ's banner, which must be my excuse for having said so little to them before ; only I would advise them to look round the world, and see how successful the prince of darkness is, how many are his manifest subjects, doing avowedly his works, and labouring as if they purposed to support his kingdom, and defeat the design of Jesus. Such a review should stir them up to show themselves men, yea, Christian soldiers, and provoke them to put on the whole armour of God, not only to defend themselves, but also to invade their enemy. Oh, it is a pitiable sight to a Christian heart tenderly affected for God's honour, Christ's kingdom, and men's souls. Go, my friends, consider it, mourn over it before God, and every one of you, if you can, pluck a brand out of the burning, out of a worse burning than any which this world knows, from greater terrors than those of a city swallowed up by an earthquake, though nothing on this side the eternal terrors of the Lord can surpass that ; go and strive manfully for the faith that was once delivered to the saints.

SERMON IV.

EPHESIANS VI., 11.

“Put on the whole armour of GOD, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil.”



WE are treating of the spiritual war carrying on between Christ and Satan in the hearts of men ; and, as was proposed in the first place, I have shewn the method of Christ's attack upon the kingdom of Satan in the persons of sinners, and also the devices which that enemy uses to defeat the success of it.

II. I am now, in the second place, more directly with the design of the text, to describe to you the wiles of the devil against Christ in the persons of believers, whereby he endeavours to shake their constancy, and to render them disserviceable to the cause wherein they are engaged ; and likewise the armour Christ hath prepared for their defence, as well as for making them fit to serve successfully under Him against the kingdom of darkness.

Satan hath many wiles for those who believe, and are gone over to Jesus ; if he cannot draw them back he will harass them, lay bars in their

way, perplex them, try to render them less fruitful, and less serviceable to the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Of the principal of these wiles of Satan, the Holy Spirit hath informed us in the fourteenth and following verses of the chapter whence my text is taken, when he describes to us the armour we must put on in order to resist them. "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, whereby ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication for all saints." Here the Christian armour is largely described, in the manner the Christian soldier must be prepared to stand against the wiles of the devil. Nor may any part of it be wanting; if so he is exposed to danger. All these together can alone render the Christian fit for service, and a match for the wiles of the devil. And it is plain, I think, that in describing the particulars of this armour, regard is had to some special wiles of the devil, to which one and another of these defences must be opposed. As if it should have been said, Put on the whole armour that ye may stand; and if you should be assaulted this way, you must have such a weapon ready; if that way, another weapon.

The figure here used is that of armour, of a soldier completely armed after the manner of those days. Here are his girdle, breastplate, sandals,

shield, helmet and sword. Then the figure being dropped, some other things are insisted on which are needed by a Christian. In proceeding, we will lay aside the figure, because we are not so ready to comprehend the several parts of it here mentioned. We will simply consider what is meant by them. And here the apostle tells us, that the things which will enable a believer to maintain his ground against the wiles of Satan, are these several particulars; and he bids him put them on, and be constant in the use of them. 1. Truth, or sincerity. 2. Righteousness; that is, the practice of all holiness. 3, The preparation of the gospel, or firmness, readiness, and constancy in all cases. 4. Faith, namely, in the promises of God in Christ. This must be put on above, or over all, because faith preserves all other graces. 5. The hope of salvation. 6. The word of God. 7. Prayer. 8. Watchfulness. 9. Supplication for all saints. Then the Christian is prepared for all the wiles of the devil.

All these he must put on, not one excepted, because one and another of these things can only preserve us from this and that wile wherewith the devil will beset us. We must walk in sincerity, because he will be often stirring up our hypocritical hearts against us. We must be in the practice of all holiness, because he will be many times pleading with us for particular exemptions. We must be ready and immoveable, for he will try us by difficulties from without. We must walk in faith, because of the fiery darts of doubt, and fear, and

terror, he will be throwing into our minds. We must have hope with us, to support us against his insinuations from this present world. We must have the Word of God, to oppose the reasonings of our own minds wherewith he will assault us. We must be in prayer, that he may not rob us of the supplies of the Spirit, and, leading us to trust to our own strength, overcome us. We must pray for all saints, because he will be trying to stir up the pride of our hearts one against another. Since, therefore, the devil hath so many wiles against the kingdom of Christ in the hearts of believers, whereby he endeavours to trouble, draw them back, and render them useless, it will be needful both to consider distinctly the several parts of the devil's artillery against them, and also the several things here mentioned, wherewith Jesus enables his servants to resist and vanquish them. I shall consider them both together, in the order wherein they here lie before us.

1. The believer must be walking in truth, or sincerity, because the devil will be essaying to stir up the natural hypocrisy of his heart against them. Sincerity is a single intention to please God, to mean this one thing, the doing what God bids us. And this one thing is a very plain thing to understand, and a very easy thing to practise too, for a saint in heaven or an angel of God's presence, whose souls are pure, perfect images of God; but for us, who have still to contend with a corrupted heart, this is not easy, singly to mean God, and not ourselves. And therefore, we are called to put

it on, to do so more and more, to purify our aims and views, that having respect less and less to any bye ends of our own, we may be more upright and honest in our desires and endeavours to please God only in the whole of our conduct. When we are abundantly single in our intentions, simply desiring to please God, and not willing to admit any indirect views, to warp us away in any degree from the uprightness of a Christian conversation, then we come to a point in our designs and conduct, and are best able to oppose or discover any contrary views which our selfish nature will be suggesting to us at the instance of Satan. Isaiah, speaking of our Lord, mentions this sincerity; "Faithfulness shall be the girdle of his reins." Sincerity kept all his conduct right; it did not fall asunder, and run one part of it one way, and another the other. St. Paul was so well advised of the deceitfulness of his heart in this particular, that he dared not to say his aims were as pure and unmixed as he wished them to be. "I know nothing by myself," says he; on the contrary, his conscience witnessed to him that as far as he could see, it was with simplicity and godly sincerity that he had his conversation; yet he could not be confident that all was as it ought. He knew his own heart too well to trust to it, therefore he adds, "Yet am I not hereby justified." I must leave that matter to God, who searcheth the hearts; he knows; and "he that judgeth me is the Lord." Now every watchful observer of his own heart and servant of Jesus, is well aware how ready the enemy is to thrust in

bye ends upon him. For example, he tries to taint his design for God's glory with secret lurking views of his own praise ; or to insinuate schemes of interest into his heart, while he at first thought of nothing but making profession of Christ ; or to introduce a desire of pleasing himself into the services of worship he pays to God. And as far as Satan can prevail, either unobservedly or openly, to have these selfish ends take place, so far he succeeds, mars the full extent of gospel liberty in the soul, disappoints the full design of the Redeemer, and renders his servants less serviceable to him. And what gives great advantage to the enemy in this respect, is our natural love of self—self-praise, self-interest, self-pleasing, of which we are naturally and vastly fond ; and therefore, when the adversary is bringing into our hearts these bye ends, we are not over apt to observe or be displeased with them.

Well then, Christians, you must see to it, that your loins be girt about with sincerity and truth, as the apostle calls it, that your views be not leavened with bye ends. To this purpose you must seek to grow more in the knowledge and love of God which is in Jesus Christ ; your hearts must be more drawn up and out to your God and Father in Christ, by the constraining influence of redeeming love. The more you have of this upon your hearts, the more will the blessed Spirit give you of the mind of Jesus with it, whose "meat and drink" it was, to do "the will of Him that sent him." You must be examining your hearts

and conduct daily by God's word, which, well and diligently applied, will show you the truth and hypocrisy there is in your inward parts. And herein you must be instant in prayer; you must seek for power to put away the old leaven, those indirect aims by which you know and see the sincerity of your hearts is tarnished and defiled. And in doing this, take advantage of the devices of Satan, to do yourselves service; watch the bye motions he stirs up in you; learn by them to know your corrupted hearts the better; follow his suggestions to the bottom, and be more humbly sensible of that corrupt nature in you by which he thus works, and without which he could not thus work upon you. This will abase you in your own eyes, quicken your faith in Jesus Christ, and enliven your earnest supplications for renewing grace, and so purifying your intentions, turn the devil's against himself.

While we are speaking of sincerity, it will be useful to observe, that a man is sincere when the ruling intention of his heart is to please God according to his revealed will; when his prevailing aim and design is to believe in Jesus Christ, to love and serve God. That is true grace which is reigning grace. Wherefore, though there be indirect aims mixing with our conduct, which we do not discover; or though we find the risings of indirect views in our minds, yet while to please God is the ruling aim, sincerity is safe nevertheless. St. Peter was certainly a sincere Christian, yet whether he saw it or not, an indirect aim had

got into his heart when he withdrew himself from the Gentile converts at Antioch, on the coming down of certain Jews thither from St. James. St. Paul withstood him to the face upon it, says he was to be blamed, and that he walked not according to the truth of the gospel, fearing those that were of the circumcision. There was the bye end that was got into his heart—he feared those of the circumcision.

On the other hand, if to please God be not the governing principle, the state is bad; there is no faith and love in the heart, though there be often a good deal of thoughtfulness and seriousness at times. This was the case of the Israelites all along; and when GOD smote them with his corrections, as He may do us with afflictions or the threatenings of His word, then they turned themselves, and inquired after GOD. But it was soon over; they quickly started aside, for their hearts were never wholly with GOD. People of this sort are generally termed hypocrites in Scripture; not that they mean to cheat GOD, their neighbour, or themselves; but because they actually do so, because there is no sound conversion wrought in them. And this kind is excellently described by St. James. He calls them “double minded men, unstable in all their ways.” They are people not utterly dead in sin, without any thought, sense, or care about their condition; but such as, on occasions especially, have a good deal of fear and concern upon their hearts, and look towards Christ, but cannot find in their hearts to give up all for His

sake. They talk, perhaps, a good deal about religion, perhaps do a good deal of the outward parts of it, and possibly may conceive a little hope that they are serving God; but at the bottom they are serving sin. The love of sin, some lust possibly unseen, sticks by them, and governs their conduct. Such cannot please God, for they are pleasing themselves. They are double minded; they have a half mind to Christ; would need have the pardon and glory which He has to bestow, but they have a greater mind to sin, that is to this world; and so they are unstable in their ways. There is a war within them: not between grace and lust, but between conscience and lust. Conscience oftentimes reproves sharply, and calls loudly, and then follows something of earnestness and diligence in proving and communicating, and it may be, some hasty acts of profession, which look like real godliness; but the love of sin still reigning within, the love of reputation, or profit, or pleasure still prevailing, and keeping undisturbed possession, very soon the fit of seriousness is over, and they fall asleep for a season. In this case it is plain there is no sincerity, no single desire to please God. And it is reasonably to be supposed, that wherever the gospel is preached there will be such persons, by the general allusion which St. James makes to the case. Wherefore, if there be any among you, as I suppose there are, who have been described in the case mentioned, I must beg them to consider that they are not yet Christians; that in faith, love, and service, they are insincere; that they do not belong

to Christ, but are of the party of Satan, however terrifying or mortifying the thought may be to them, and how much soever difference there may be, in many respects, between them and grosser sinners. My friends, you must look for the cause in your own hearts, for there you may find it. You must first see that you are well humbled in the discoveries of your sinfulness and danger; and then both Christ will look upon and help you, and you will be willing to part with all for His name's sake. But I go on.

2. The believer must be walking in the practice of all holiness, because Satan will be often pleading with his heart for particular exemptions. There is no such thing as giving up a single point of duty without giving up the whole. A true Christian may come short in everything, may falter on many occasions; but whoever lives in the neglect of one known duty, or practises one known sin, is no true Christian; for "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all." Whatever people may imagine as to being saved their own way, yet he who doth not diligently set himself to believe in Jesus Christ, and to repent of his sins, and to have a really new heart; he who would be excused the love of God, and of his neighbour, and any one of those many particulars which are contained under both of them; he who will take leave to be worldly minded, idle, vain, proud, injurious, oppressive, malicious, revengeful, lewd, drunken, profane; he who wilfully neglects God's appointment of wor-

ship, turns away from prayer, or God's Word, or communicating, or the Lord's day; whatever he may think of himself, Christ thinks nothing of him; he is guilty of all, he belongs to the kingdom of darkness. The true servant of Jesus labours in all things to walk as his Master also walked; and to exercise himself to have "a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards man." And this he must do with intent not to decline in the least point, for Satan is ever at work, always most busy where the believer is most weak, and where it would be of the worst consequence to the cause of Christ that he should fail. I say, all things considered, there was much need the apostle should call on us to put on "the breastplate of righteousness," to be exercising all manner of godliness and Christian graces, that we might be able to stand against the wiles of the devil, who will be stirring up our hearts to plead hard for exemption in some of the most trying, and therefore most distinguishing instances of a Christian's duty. For example, he may try to weaken the cause of Christ by stirring up our fears; and thereby endeavour to deter us from the severity of a truly Christian conduct. We know how well he succeeded with Peter and the rest of his disciples this way; they forsook, and he denied Christ. The devil will be essaying to make every believer the same; he will endeavour to restrain that freedom, openness, and boldness of conduct; which the self-mistaken disciple so well expressed when he said, "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death,"

and "though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee." Let every one who hath made profession of Jesus Christ, answer for himself, whether, by fears of one sort and another, the enemy hath not often succeeded, so that he fled from his own standard. Yea, let us all ask ourselves carefully, whether by one fear and another he doth not now restrain the freedom of our conduct, and keep us more than we ought, and than is consistent with our Master's honour and interest, in a way of compliance with the fashions of a wicked world. I am sure many would be Christians if they were not afraid; and perhaps we should be all better Christians did not worldly fears stand in our way.

Again, he may work upon our pride in many cases, pleading exemption for us from some special duties. He may try to make us excuse ourselves the duty of brotherly love in some instances, as regards those who may differ from us in denomination and opinions, provoking our spirits, and heating us against them; like the two disciples who would have called for fire from heaven to consume the Samaritan village, which, under the influence of the same party spirit, refused to receive Christ. Or he may attempt to engage us to dispense with the duty of forgiveness of injuries, as was implied in that question of Peter, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" Or he may labour to keep us from many exercises of Christian humility, as condescension to men of low estate, and dealing courteously

with them, or visiting a sick neighbour because he is poor ; in a word, from washing the disciples' feet after our Lord's example.

Once more, he may work upon us in afflictions to cause us to hurt Christ and ourselves, by an unsuitable behaviour, as if in our case we had a dispensation to murmur and be impatient. So Moses was too apt to think when he spake unadvisedly with his lips. So the great Elijah could say, in a fit of fretfulness, "O Lord, take away my life ; for I am not better than my fathers." So Job thought he had a right to lose his patience ; and the peevish prophet Jonah would insist that he did well to be angry. When affliction falls heavily, we are too apt to decline, and to fancy ourselves discharged from the duties of patience and submission. Wherefore, on the whole, however much it may be our duty to maintain a uniformity in our conduct, and in every thing and in all cases to act consistently, yet, by means of the sinfulness of our own hearts, and the wiles of the devil, it is exceedingly difficult. Wherefore, let all who profess to believe in Jesus, examine their conduct, especially the side of it which is weakest. Let them allow of no excuses, but in the strength of the Lord of hosts, let them buckle on the breastplate of righteousness, and see that in all things they walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called.

I conclude, for the present, with this one remark from the two points you have now heard, which also would be equally manifest from all the succeeding ; namely, how differently Christ and Satan

maintain the spiritual war. You saw before, how the Redeemer came upon the kingdom of Satan with plain truth and awful power. You see here how Satan endeavours to hurt the kingdom of Christ by artifice, lies, false appearances, and venturing to the outposts only, as I may say, of the Lord's army. For why? He can do no other; his power is restrained; he knows who is stronger than he. He doth not want will; and if not thus restrained, how would he war? Ye need not fear him, believers; He that is with you is stronger than all the legion of Satan; only be sure you do not trust him, for he is a liar. And ye servants of his, how easily can ye escape! All the hosts of them cannot stop you. Oh! that ye were but willing to change masters! And surely there is no comparison between Christ and Satan!

SERMON V.

EPHESIANS VI., 11.

“Put on the whole armour of GOD, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil.”

WE are speaking now of the attempts of Satan, whereby he endeavours to hurt the kingdom of Christ in the persons of believers ; and of those several graces wherewith the Christian must be prepared, in order to defend himself, and baffle the prince of darkness. These graces the apostle describes in a figure, calling the whole of them together the Christian armour. But seeing it is not very easy for you to comprehend the nature and use of many parts of the armour mentioned, I chose rather to drop the figure altogether, and to exhibit to you the several graces intended, together with their necessity and use in the believer's war with this spiritual enemy. They are these :—1. Truth, or sincerity. 2. Righteousness, or the practice of holiness. 3. The preparation of the gospel, or firmness, readiness, and constancy in all cases. 4. Faith, namely, in the promises of God in Christ. This must be put

on above, that is, over all, because faith preserves all other graces. 5. The hope of salvation. 6. The word of God. 7. Prayer. 8. Watchfulness. 9. Supplication for all saints. Thus is the Christian's armour prepared for all the wiles of the devil, and he must be prepared in every one of these particulars, not one excepted ; because by one and another of them, we can only be preserved from this and that wile of Satan wherewith he tempts us. Thus we must walk in sincerity, because he is often stirring up our hypocritical hearts against us. We must be in the practice of all holiness, because many times he pleads with us for particular exemptions. We must be ready and immoveable, since he will try us by difficulties from without. We must walk in faith, because of the fiery darts of doubt, fear, and terror he throws into our minds. We must have hope with us, to support us against his insinuations from this present world. We must have the word of God, to oppose the high reasonings of our minds wherewith he assaults us. We must be in prayer, that he may not rob us of the supplies of the Spirit, and, leading us to trust to our own strength, overcome us. We must be watchful, because he sleepeth not. We must pray for the Saints, because he often essays to stir up the pride of our hearts one against another.

I have spoken already of the two first of these, and shown how much need there is, that we should have a simple intention to please God, and an unreserved regard to all His will, in order to keep

us safe from the insincerity of our hearts, and from the plea of flesh and blood in many instances, wherewith the best Christians must expect to be assaulted by the prince of darkness. I go on now—

3. To speak of firmness, readiness, and immoveableness, since the enemy will try us by difficulties from without. To show fully the force and power of this temptation, we must recollect that by nature we are all members of Satan's kingdom, for we are all born so. Now, the nature of this state is, that it consists in sin and ignorance. The apostle puts both of them together: "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not;" and again, they are both implied in this expression: "who mind earthly things." The heart is set on this present world—there is the sin; and that without any spiritual discernment of the things of God—there is the ignorance. Wherefore, when any are really brought out of his kingdom into that of Christ's, by the effectual working of His word and Spirit, they are said to be, "delivered from this present evil world." The thing to be noted is, that they leave all others in it still subjects of the kingdom of darkness, still lying in sin and ignorance. Now, the watchful adversary takes his advantage of this, to embroil and entangle the disciples of Jesus. He turns the sin and ignorance of the one into a snare and plague to the other, that according to the different turns of the children of this world, the bulk of unbelievers may be divided into those

of no conscience and those of mistaken conscience ; and the servants of Christ must expect trials from both, such as will try their constancy, and prove their firmness. To use the figure of the apostle in the place, such will be to believers like those sharp spikes and nails, which are used to be thrown in the way of soldiers, to lame and wound them, and against which they must be well shod to tread on them with safety.

Many unbelievers are, as I have said, men of little or no conscience. They mind earthly things with the full bent of their hearts, daily pursuing the pleasures or interests of life with importunity, and a total disregard of the things which are above. These are many everywhere ; and in proportion as their number is, so their influence being the more, there must be occasion of many trials to those who are not of this world. The enemy will be working much with the pride of believers' hearts, by means of the degeneracy of others. It is much if he do not often bring them hereby to shameful compliances, and such as shall give great pain and grief afterwards.

For example, the desire of esteem is natural to, and strong in us ; and to be continually denying it, to be living and acting in the midst of a wicked world, not only in a way above the world, but contrary to the ways of the world, to the manners and customs of our friends, acquaintance, or relations, as it will often happen—in such circumstances to keep the conduct unspotted, neither to betray religion by yielding, nor to disgrace it by morose-

ness, this is a trial of constancy indeed. And how artfully will the devil be pleading with the heart to remit something of gospel severity, or to despise and scorn, instead of pitying those who are led captive of Satan ! This is a trial which is an overmatch for multitudes, hath kept some in a slavish fear that they have not been able to confess Christ before man, hath driven others to the mistaken religion of retirement and the cloister, and wrought up not a few to the churlish temper of Nabal. To behave after the manner of righteous Lot, not to comply with the manners of the men of Sodom, and yet to remonstrate with them in his temper of compassion and meekness—"I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly"—demands a stedfast and immoveable spirit. A notable case in point is that of Noah and his family, who was just and perfect in his generation, and walked with God when the whole earth was corrupt, when the Church of God was reduced to eight persons. O, my brethren, where is our faith ? where is our firmness in comparison of this ? Let us apply this. Sinful, worldly men have always had, and always will have, the cry on their side, because of their numbers. They are still the "many." The broad way is ever the fullest ; so that true religion can never have worldly encouragement, but must be discountenanced, because contrary to the way of the generality.

As many as know what it is to serve Jesus Christ, the Lord knows their trials, and how difficult a thing it is to renounce the wicked world.

And have you not all failed, more or less? Have you never failed Christ, to humour the company; nor been ashamed to speak the word of truth and soberness; nor wanted courage to express by a suitable conduct, a becoming dislike of the practice of sin before your eyes? Have you always found courage to separate from the sin of sinners, when duty allowed you not to separate from their society? What struggles have you found within on such occasions! what pleadings of the enemy with your deceitful hearts! It is a rare thing not to worship the golden image with the multitude; to preserve integrity when many are defiled. Can you say that Satan never got advantage of you on this quarter? In spite of his insinuations which you have known; in spite of fear, shame, and every perverse suggestion of a selfish heart crying in you for compliance, have you ever stood immovable? Are you now unspotted from the world, your conduct nothing restrained by the fashions of those who have not the fear of God before their eyes? A man shall find it no easy thing to be ready in every case and place, to be firm and unshaken in conduct, always to act up to the truth of Christianity, while he knows God only by faith, and the wickedness of the world is ever in his sight. The custom of seeing sin committed is apt to render it less odious, while the heart is ready to join, and the devil loses no opportunity of pressing the believer to it.

On the other hand, it is a matter well worth the consideration of the children of this world, who

are lost to conscience, what a snare they are to the children of God, and what an accursed use is made of them by the prince of darkness, while they think nothing of it. You do not consider, sinners, what use the devil makes of you, to oppose the Saviour of men, and to weaken and ensnare his servants. You know not that. You are, the whole body of you, Satan's army, and every one of you Satan's soldier, actually and daily fighting against Christ, and all who belong to him. Alas! you think that you do no harm to others. It is the policy of the devil so to deceive you. You think you harm none but your own souls. And is that nothing with you, when your souls are so precious? You will not believe you harm Jesus, harm his kingdom and glory, harm the souls one of another by your evil examples, harm the children of God, that they can hardly escape unhurt from you. But you will not believe it. Yet if you thought it were so, you would confess it were not well; you would believe it could not be well to side with Satan against the Redeemer; to be as thorns in the side, and snares in the path of the righteous, to turn them out of the right way. Yet whether you believe it or not, it is the very truth, and that day shall declare it, when ye shall find it had been better that a millstone were hanged about your necks, and you had been cast into the depths of the sea, than to have offended Christ's little ones by the daily course of your ungodly deeds.

But there are others of mistaken conscience,

whom the adversary of souls knows how to use to the hindrance or vexation of such as belong to Christ's kingdom. It was said before, that the kingdom of darkness consists in sin and ignorance. And this is a state consistent with an awakened conscience, as well as a seared one. It cannot be said that the Pharisee in the temple had no conscience, yet it must be allowed he was in sin and ignorance. While the guilt of sin is undiscovered, and the heart therefore unhumbled, whatever conscience and light there is, must be abused, and the scheme of religion can be only self-righteousness. As far as conscience acts, there will be a leaning to some performance or other, as far as the light reaches; but there being no sense of sin at the bottom, there can be no faith in Christ; consequently, no inward conversion from sin to God in the heart, which remains, however deceived by show and appearance, in love with the present world. Now, to such a state the gospel is directly contrary in every instance. It charges such, as well as other sinners, with sin and guilt; batters down all conceit of self-righteousness, by insisting that there is none righteous, no, not one; so far from it, that all alike are children of wrath, yea, and declares to all equally, that unless they repent they shall perish. For this cause Christ was hated in his day, by those who thought highly of themselves. And from the commencement of his gospel to the end, men of mistaken conscience have taken, and will take displeasure at those whose conduct preaches self-denying doctrines. I say whose

conduct preaches them ; for it is the practice of humility, faith, and heavenly-mindedness, which disconcerts the measures, and troubles the false peace of those mistaken people, who have nothing to lean on but the poor shadow of their own doing, and are really unhumbled and unconverted. Hence, in various ways, as God sees fit to allow, the true servant of Christ meets with trials and troubles from such, in a particular manner, as think themselves to be something when they are nothing. And the case must continue the same, till either the servant of Christ ceases to walk as becometh the gospel, or the men of mistaken conscience be brought to a true sight of their sins, or fall off into total hardness of heart. If you read the Bible you will find it was always so. Cain had some conscience ; he brought an offering, but it was in the pride and self-sufficiency of his heart ; and hereupon he was angry at his brother, because his sacrifice, offered in faith, was accepted. And so it hath been ever since. St. Paul says, "He that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit." Himself was an instance ; for he persecuted the Church of God, and assigns the reason, that he "did it in unbelief." That was the very thing which enraged our Lord's enemies ; and that also was what brought so many persecutions on the apostles and first Christians. But now, in all these things Satan is the principal mover, and by them he exceedingly tries and endeavours to seduce believers from the faith. He stirs up the mistaken zeal of unhumbled hearts

against them, and at other times has made them the objects of ridicule and mockery to men, misrepresenting, because misunderstanding the principles of their conduct—"Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?" Now, this at all times falls hard, though sometimes more heavily than others, on the servants of Christ. Yet at any rate, it is no small trial of faith and proof of constancy. Satan, too, will be making the most of it in the heart, magnifying everything, and stirring up fears and forebodings of what was never meant, and will never come to pass. So that, on the whole, while without are fightings, and within are fears, the circumstances of the believer, in this respect, will be often interesting and searching. Wherefore he must be ready in gospel preparation of heart; that is,

(1.) He must bear upon his heart the unsearchable riches of Christ. These are unsearchable; there is no finding out the depth of them. In Him dwelleth all fulness—the fulness of Divine power, wisdom, love, truth; the fulness of all mediatorial sufficiency—all saving, sanctifying, glorifying grace; the fulness of all human beauty and perfection. He is rich in himself, rich in his gifts, his graces, his protecting power. There is nothing a sinner can desire—much more, there is nothing a sinner can want, which is not in Christ fully, richly, inexhaustibly. Look round the universe; look up to the heavens above, and down to hell beneath; collect all your wishes together from them all, and you shall have an infinite supply

of them all in Christ. Look upon Christ and you shall see all in all. You must be searching out his riches; the more you are acquainted with him, the more ready will you be to part with all for him, to count all else dung and dross. Moses "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." If he set so much value on the reproach of Christ, what must his esteem have been of his glory? Doubtless there is that in Christ which can make up all manner of sufferings, wants, troubles, tribulations, that can be endured for his sake. But the riches of Christ must be seen by the eye of faith, otherwise we cannot stand in the evil day.

(2.) The believer must reckon the cost. Many falter for want of this; they do not reckon upon the cross which every disciple must bear after the Master. They receive the word with joy, but by and by when tribulation arises, they are offended. They behave as if some strange thing had happened to them when they fall into affliction. St. Paul, after he had suffered much, says that he knew everywhere tribulations did await him; and speaks of what was still behind of the afflictions of Christ to be filled up in his flesh, Acts xx., 23; Col. i., 24. There is no such thing as having Christ, without forsaking and parting with all indispositions and afflictions, and so actually everything which is a bar in the way of our duty; while also we know not but he may demand our very lives from us for his name's sake. We should take into our account what we must part with, and what we may be

called upon to forego for him. We must reckon that he will be continually calling for somewhat or other as the token of our love to him; and we must be ready to render up whatever he shall require. We must forget what we may have done already, and stand prepared for greater trials, sufferings, and self-denials, for his glory and interests.

(3.) The believer must not be presumptuous; he must watch and pray that he enter not into temptation. St. Paul says, when he was weak, oppressed with affliction, and sensible of his inability to bear up under it, then he was strong. The text says we must "put on the whole armour of God." Nothing less than the power of His might can support us in the evil day. Some do not expect, and others do not fear, afflictions for Christ's sake; but when the trial comes they both forsake him. The instance of Peter stands on record for our admonition. He was too stout to fear, yet, you see, too weak to stand. Whoever shall take up Peter's confidence, it shall cost him a bitter weeping. And who is he that shall not need to distrust his own strength, when the great Elijah, after the noble acts of profession he had made, fled for his life for fear of a woman, as if the hand of the Lord were shortened, and he was no longer able or careful to protect him? "What dost thou here, Elijah?" was the reproof of his fear. The wind, the earthquake, and fire testified the power of God, and confirmed the faith of the prophet. Alas! what are we without the strength of the Lord? How soon will Satan sift us as wheat!

In these three things the life of gospel readiness and immoveableness consists. He only who bears the Redeemer on his heart as his best possession, who expects that tribulations shall betide him, and waits for them in fear and in the strength of the Lord ; who is ready, hath his feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, will be able to stand against the wiles which the devil raises against him, by means of the ignorance of mistaken men.

To conclude this head, it hath appeared that the most of these oppositions that are raised against Christ in the persons of believers, do spring from the sinfulness and ignorance of men's hearts. It will become us, therefore, to be very cautious how we judge, speak, and act concerning others who differ from us in opinion, and especially those who go beyond us in practice, lest haply we be found to fight against God. Our hearts are naturally sinful and blind, consequently, extremely apt to betray us. And we know how a self-righteous party stirred up St. Paul ignorantly to persecute the church, for which he went sorrowing to his grave.

SERMON VI.

EPHESIANS VI., 11.

“ Put on the whole armour of GOD, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil.”

IT is the manner of the wily enemy of Jesus and of souls, to speak peace to those against whom all the terrors of the Lord are levelled. Moses gives us to understand that a man will “bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination,” or stubbornness “of mine heart.” So Satan contrives it always. He hath a thousand ways to keep men easy in their sins. He contrives to quiet the grossest sinner with the thought that others are worse than he. He can still the remonstrances of conscience with an excuse such as, “It was an oversight, no man liveth and sinneth not;” or with a seemingly good resolution. He can swell up the things which the sinner doth well to appearance, that he shall see nothing of the evil that is in him. He is so artful this way, that the grossest sinner, the worst child of hell, may probably conceive he hath somewhat to say for himself, some

hope that all may be well, though he walk in the imagination of his heart. It is but too evident, my brethren, that many of you live in sin, yet possibly say in your hearts, "I shall have peace," and are buoyed up by one vain hope or another. I beseech you not to hearken to the deceiver. I know you are very much inclined to believe him, because his counsel suits your inclination, doth not urge you to any self-denials, but gives you full encouragement to continue in those very sinful things which are the joy of your hearts. But is his counsel therefore good, because you like it? Do not believe this deceiver. You are sure it cannot end well. Ahab would needs go up to Ramoth Gilead; so he hearkened to the lying spirit which was in the prophets; and he would not endure the prophet of the Lord, because he did not prophesy good concerning him, that is, did not humour him in his wicked practices and ambitious desires. But mark the issue; he went, and was slain. Sinners, this will be your very case; if you hearken to the lies of Satan, and will not hearken to the word of the Lord, it will certainly end in your ruin. Can all the lies of the deceiver make your state good when it is bad. Hearken not to the devil. Hear God's word: there you will find a thousand times over, that impenitent sinners like you are in a woful condition; that ye abide under the wrath of God. Though you say in your hearts, "We shall have peace," with the man that Moses speaks of, yet it is said concerning all such, and therefore concerning you, in the verse following: "The Lord

will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven," Deut. xxix., 20.

But to the servants of Jesus the adversary speaketh terrors. If he cannot hurt, he will try to vex them. He will work up their worldly fears: if the danger be really no bigger than a man's hand, he will represent it as big with clouds, and darkness, and thunders, threatening ruin and destruction to every earthly comfort and hope. He will assay to torment them with doubts and suspicions; bringing it into question whether there be any such thing as grace, faith, love, or sincerity in them. He hath a large battery of profane thoughts, horrid cursings, blasphemous injections, desponding commotions, strangely wild imaginations, and self-murderous suggestions, to ply them with. To oppose all this kind of hell's artillery, the apostle bids them to be armed with faith.

4. Faith was the fourth Christian grace which the servant of Christ must be in the practice of, in order to stand against the wiles of the devil—"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. "Above all," that is over all other graces, because faith is the first grace, and the foundation of all other true graces. Whatever is not of faith is sin; faith in the blood and righteousness of Christ, which sanctifieth the believer's person and performances. Where this is not, neither do

God respect us, nor is there in what we do any truth and reality. Faith must be put on over all, because faith is the parent of all graces. It is the parent of love; we love God "because he first loved us," and gave his son to be "the propitiation for our sins." It is the parent of zeal: "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." It is, in a word, the parent of all holiness. Faith in the righteousness of Christ is the leading grace, and must be put on over all our doings, graces, services, repentances, and labours in the Lord, if we would have them evangelical. All must be sprinkled with Christ's blood; all must flow from that fountain which he hath opened for sin and uncleanness. Yet the apostle, in this passage, assigns a particular office to faith, namely, that in the exercise thereof, the believer must quench the fiery darts of the wicked. What these darts are I have just intimated. Observe how St. Paul expresses the fury of them; he calls them fiery darts, darts dipped in fire, burning as they fly, sent flaming from hell into the bosom of the believer. Darts, therefore, apt to wound and abide: fiery, because apt to kindle and light up in the soul their hellish venom. Whoever hath experienced the distress of doubts and satanical suggestions, will own the propriety of the expression. Now, it is the office of faith to quench them, to take all the fire out of them, that they may neither hurt nor frighten. We will consider these fiery darts of the wicked separately, and show you how faith is suited

to quench them all. They were said to be of three sorts : fears, doubts, and profane thoughts, cast in on the whole soul, whereby the enemy doth attempt to vex the believer, and to affrighten him from Christ.

(1.) By fears raised up in the mind of the believer, Satan endeavours to annoy him ; and he is very busy at his work, and often too successful. No sooner doth tribulation arise because of the word, but fear begins to be stirring ; a lying fear that sets the danger a thousand times greater than it is ; and we know who is the father of lies. You will see the force of it in two or three Scripture instances. When Abraham was in Egypt, and again when he was in Gerar, fear put him on a base dissembling. "They will kill me," said he to Sarah ; "say not thou art my wife, say thou art my sister." You may read in the third and fourth chapters of Exodus, what terrible apprehensions Moses felt about going to bring out the Israelites from their bondage, after God had removed all the objections his fear could suggest to him, and convinced him by a miracle that his power should be with him. Still his fear was too hard for his faith, and he said, "O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses." It is not everyone who hath the faith of Nehemiah ; "Shall such a man as I flee ?" You have heard of Elijah's fear because of a woman ; and of Jonah's fear to go to Nineveh. Peter, too, and the apostles, had their fears : "Satan," said our

Lord to Peter, "hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat : but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Satan wrought up the disciples' fears to a high pitch ; they all forsook their Master, and fled. And so he will tempt every believer to do, when the confession of Christ troubles or threatens him. There is a stout-heartedness of an unhumbléd spirit, which speaks great swelling words of vanity as if fear had no place in the soul. But this is an ill sign ; it betrays inexperience in the Christian warfare. Those who have never feared, I suppose, have never fought. "I was with you," saith St. Paul to the Corinthians, "in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling." What is it, then, but that this fear is one of the fiery darts of Satan ? A dart which in time of trial is cast home into the soul with mighty violence, makes the believer shrink and tremble, yea, and presses on him so hotly, that he must fall, unless faith be at hand. Faith is the only remedy to dispossess fear. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not : " as soon as that began to work, Peter began to weep, his fears were all gone, or turned into sorrow. If we have not the Captain of our salvation in our eye we are very cowards. We must keep close to our Leader, else the very rustling of the trees will put us to flight. But faith casts out fear ; so the apostle among the triumphs of faith mentions this, that by faith believers "out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." Thus we are

taught how to govern our fears: faith must support us; we must have recourse to the Lord, our righteousness and our hope, till faith kindle in our souls; and then, with St. Paul, we shall not count even our lives dear unto ourselves.

And hereupon you may take this remark with you for your comfort, that here, as in all other cases, God turns the devices of the devil on his own head. He makes the very troubles the enemy raises about us, and the fears he stirs up in us, occasions of our keeping closer to Christ in the exercise of lively faith. What did Peter lose by his fall? or what doth any believer lose by afflictions and fears? They work patience, experience, hope; they humble the soul, and exalt the Redeemer.

(2.) Another of Satan's fiery darts is doubt or suspicion. The unbelief of our hearts gives Satan much advantage against us; and he is careful to improve it. Now, as there is nothing which either detracts so much from the glory of the Redeemer, or so much delays our progress and our peace, as doubting of the Redeemer's sufficiency and love, so there is nothing more frequent among the servants of Jesus than cases of this sort. At one time the enemy takes advantage of the remaining self-dependance of believers: he observes they lean to their own doings, when, perhaps, they see it not themselves; therefore, he suggests to them, that religion is so hard and difficult a thing, that they shall never attain to it, and that it were as well to give it over. In this case, the man doth not seem

to himself to have any doubt of the power of Christ; but he looks for somewhat in himself which he cannot find; he strives earnestly after it, but gets no peace; his mind is uneasy and troubled; he walks heavily, still comes short, tries again, fails again, and mourns again. All the while Satan is at hand to drive him to despondency; and he walks in a way neither honourable and profitable to his Master, nor comfortable to himself. He wants the shield of faith; not that he has no faith, but that he has too much self-righteousness. He must take the shield of faith; he must take Christ alone for his righteousness; he must see his unprofitableness in all he does, and the filthiness of his best performances in the sight of a holy God. He must get his heart assured of the fulness of Jesus, and his doubts shall remove, and Satan be disappointed. This is a negative kind of unbelief, wherein he may be said not so properly to distrust Christ, as to trust in himself: and as much as we do trust in ourselves, it is certain our state must be uncomfortable and uneasy, and we must give the devil leave to practise upon us, to weary us out. This is a common case; look to yourselves if it be not yours. If it be, if you walk uncomfortably for this cause, seek through prayer to be more sensible of your guiltiness, to discover plainly your unworthiness in your best and every performance; be well advised how you can do nothing in the way of satisfying God; and then, well acquainted with God's righteousness in the obedience and death of Jesus, apply yourselves there, as to the alone and

all-sufficient remedy for your otherwise lost souls. This is the sure and only way of removing your doubts, and disappointing the devil. At another time, unbelief is positive, as I would call it; an actual distrust of the power of Christ, when nevertheless, the soul finds nothing else to trust to. Here Satan comes on with greater fury and more fearful terror; and nothing but experience knows what the wounded soul feels, while, though convicted and stripped of all hope in itself, it cannot be satisfied of the power of the Redeemer. Oh, how busy will the adversary then be in raising objections in the soul to one thing and another of that redemption which is in Jesus! How will he press on the spirit that there is no hope! how magnify transgressions to an impossibility of forgiveness! and how urge on the soul to give over, as if all were vain, as if there were no help in God; and either to cease calling on God any more, or to seek for peace in company, pleasure, and indulgence! In the mean time, the poor soul calls on God, as well as it can, out of the depths, and will not let Christ go, but says, "Here will I perish; though he slay me, yet I will trust in him." Here the promises of God must be taken in; and when their light springeth up, what can unbelief or Satan gainsay to God's plain truth? It gives them the lie; proves them both to be liars. All in such circumstances, who think almost their sins too great to be forgiven, must look well to the promises that are in Jesus: how general they are, extending to all who come to him; how

free they are, offering life without money or price; how full they are, for "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." They must look to them, and not let them slip, having them next their hearts; they must pray always for that grace of faith which is the gift of God. Thus must they take to them the shield of faith, and the fiery darts of Satan shall be quenched.

(3.) Again, by the fiery darts of profane thoughts Satan tempts the servants of Christ. It has been remarked concerning these, that they are tokens of some good work begun, at least, in the soul; instead of showing that all is lost, they denote that something is gained. For why? Will Satan terrify those who are his peaceful subjects? Will he stir up their hearts to curse God, when they are denying him every day? Or is there any appearance, that one mourning and afflicted because of the language of hell thrown into his unwilling mind, and which he earnestly longs to be rid of, should be a child of the devil? Nevertheless, by such black suggestions, the wicked one doth often terrify and hurt those who labour under them: they ignorantly charge them on themselves as the most heinous sins, (so they would be indeed did they belong to them,) consequently they grow impatient to be rid of them. They are sometimes frightened from prayer, where, perhaps, they meet with the most of them; they neglect other duties of religion and their station while perplexed about them; and may sometimes be driven over to the most destruc-

tive measures, if they cannot be relieved from them. And these consequences the deceiver intends by them. He gains nothing by them, if he cannot bring men, by means of them, to impatience and murmuring, to a disuse of the word and prayer, to a neglect of duties, or bad courses. There is no harm done to the soul by these darts, fiery as they are, if they have no ill influence on the conduct. And they will not have, if the shield of faith be set against them. Faith puts the soul into the hands of the Redeemer; and when it is there, what can Satan do? He may roar, and throw his darts against it; but what then? Can he pluck it out of the Redeemer's hand? That all the host of hell cannot do. They look terrible, and throw their darts, but they cannot hurt. This the believer, in such circumstances, must be careful to be assured of, saying in his heart, "I know that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him." And what then? Why, he must be patient, as knowing there is no sin in all these suggestions; he must go on with his duty, as little troubled and regardful of them as possible; and he must expect some good will come of it to his soul, being persuaded that "all things work together for good to them that love God," and that the Redeemer will overrule even this to his advantage. It is most likely somewhat of this was the thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, which was sent to buffet St. Paul. You may remark, he put on the shield of faith; he prayed thrice to his Lord, and the answer was, "My grace

is sufficient for thee." He was patient, and he saw a blessing in it afterwards. It was sent to keep him humble, lest he should be exalted above measure by the abundance of his revelations; yea, he repeats this gracious design of the visitation in the same verse—"lest I should be exalted above measure." Let none, therefore, in this case be discouraged, as if they were fallen into some great sin, whereas they are but in temptation; but let them keep close to Christ, and persevere in their duty, remembering that his grace is sufficient for them. Thus much of the fiery darts of the wicked one.

Now let us reflect a moment on the rage, malice, envy, and might of the devil and his angels. You see their rage—how furiously they come on; their malice—how unwearied they are against us; their envy—we have done them no wrong, yet they would have us miserable as themselves. O, my brethren, that we should ever nourish anything of that fury, malice, envy, which which we abhor in them, which make them very devils. You see their might, "principalities, powers, spiritual wickednesses in high places." These are your enemies, believers; these your friends, sinners. Who would have such friends, and who would not fear such enemies? It is possible, believers, that the weakest of you is more than a match for all their legion. "Resist the devil," says the word of truth, "and he will flee from you." He will, he must, he doth; he can only conquer by your yielding. Oh the power

of Jesus ! What is he daily doing on earth ? In the weakness of his very servant, he is vanquishing and routing all the legions of hell. It is the Lord's doing ; it is marvellous in our eyes. Only submit to Jesus, and the prince of darkness shall be cast out. What can resist the arm of our Redeemer God ? The troops of hell are nothing before him. They feel the force of his irresistible will ; they tremble, they fly ; and he will soon shut them up in hell together. Alas ! friends, that any of you should choose to be shut up with them, when Jesus hath set wide open the everlasting doors of heaven, and bids you all enter. Yes, believers, you shall see the Son of God come with power which he hath not yet displayed, though hell trembles now and flees before him. Then, decked with majesty, glittering with glory, he shall shake the heavens and the earth ; he shall give recompence to his enemies, and salvation to his elect ; for who shall stay him ? Lord Jesus, increase our faith. Amen.

SERMON VII.

EPHESIANS VI., 11.

“Put on the whole armour of GOD that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil.”



BELIEVERS you must be acquainted with the wiles of the devil. “We are not ignorant of his devices,” saith the apostle; yet how many, how awful they are! I have shown you divers of them; both those whereby he leads captive such as are the subjects of his hellish dominion, and those whereby he lieth in wait to deceive the servants of Jesus. By hypocrisy, by excusing, by persecutions from without; by fear, doubts, and profane suggestions within, he hath been already seen to tempt the soul of the believer. And now, ye children of the Most High, heirs of glory, and followers of Jesus, I call on you to have always abiding on your hearts “the hope of salvation,” because the enemy will be trying to insinuate himself into your hearts by the love of this present world. Satan hath a high opinion of this stratagem. He would not be persuaded that Job’s religion was anything more than

worldly ease and happiness. "Doth Job," he said, "fear God for nought? Put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." You may see his great confidence in the power of this temptation, by the use he made of it in assaulting our Lord. He showed him "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Satan hath the art of showing all these things with an alluring advantage, before the imaginations of men; and by lying arts is ready to persuade he hath the power of bestowing them. Nor is it any wonder he should have high expectations from this device when he sees the power of it on multitudes. The pleasure, honour, and interest of this life, are the snares by which he beguiles the greater half of his subjects. And is it to be thought he will not reckon this as the most effectual and the most poisonous arrow of his hellish quiver, which he hath to dart into the minds of believers? Hath he not too much cause to reckon upon it, when he sees the effects of it on the hearts of those who serve the Lord; how the fear of losing disconcerts, and the hope of getting warps, and the possession of what they have cools them? It is a solemn warning our Lord gives us of worldly things, when he declares, that in many, "the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful." While Satan sees the truth of this, he cannot but try the whole force of it on believers; and while they have the

same truth from the mouth of Jesus, they ought to fear. "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me," is, perhaps, the masterpiece of Satan's devices. Fall down and worship the devil! you will say; who doth this? Every child of this present world; every lover of pleasure, money, ease, honour, doth it; all such worship the devil. What, think you, you worship him the less, because you see him not? He hath that cunning to hide himself behind the curtain, while he presents before you the scenes of worldly enjoyment, ensnares all your hearts with the love of them, and keeps you his contented servants. You will find them at last to be no other than Satan's net, wherein he catches your souls; you will find them to have been the accursed engines, by which he hath kept you from Christ and caring for your eternal interests. Then you will feel what you care not now to think, that you have made the worst bargain in preferring pleasure to heaven, and gold to godliness.

But I am now treating of worldly things, as the people of God are endangered by them. And here I must both show you the danger believers are in from them, and also the remedy to be applied for mortifying and subduing them.

Believers, you are many ways in danger from the things of the world. If you are in want you are in danger; "Lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain," saith Agur. People in want are much in danger of dishonouring their profession by some unsuitable conduct.

Satan will be busy with them to steal, or to take some unjustifiable steps for the relief of their necessities, and will plead necessity for making compliance when all is at stake. Christians in low estate need great faith and watchfulness, not to be overawed into anything by the fear of disobliging those on whom they depend, and to be true and just in all their dealings; for I suppose there will be sometimes much urging of Satan with the heart, when necessity pleads on one side, and opportunity on the other. They require them also not to murmur at God's dispensation, but contentedly to wait his leisure in the use only of allowable means; not to envy such as have abundance; not to use uncomely behaviour to them; not to conceive hard thoughts of them, if they do not communicate after expectation; not to be unthankful for what they hold at God's hand; not to forget God, and trust in dependance on him alone in the midst of all their trouble and pressing cares. In all these cases there will need abundant care and watchfulness, for the adversary will make the most of them.

If you are in abundance you are in danger: "lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord?" It is a hard matter to be poor in spirit, and rich in purse. Satan will be swelling up the pride of the heart, to trust upon abundance, to boast of abundance. It is a striking instance in point, that of Hezekiah; he must needs show the king of Babylon's messengers his precious things, his silver and gold, and spices, and ointment, his house armour, and his treasures. Those who have abu

ance are apt to do the like ; to show their vanity and possession together.

The heart of every son of Adam is ready to swell on anything ; how much more is it in danger of being puffed up in the possession of that by which a man stands distinguished from his neighbour ! Yea, abundance also brings temptation to deny God. "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked : then he forsook God which made him." To deny God ; that is, to depart from him, as Demas did, who loved this present world ; to forget to be grateful to him as the giver of all ; to forget dependance upon him ; to show an impatient spirit under his afflictions ; to contract a haughtiness of courage, and want of courtesy towards such as are of low estate—whatever Christian is in good circumstances, will own that Satan is not asleep in any of these things.

If you be in honour, you are in danger. "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built ?" said Nebuchadnezzar. But he was an infidel. Take the case of David ; "Go and number the people," said he. Oh, what trusting in the arm of flesh ! what pride, what forgetfulness of God's mercy and goodness, lay lurking under that command ! Joseph was a noble and notable instance of moderation in honour. He did not disdain his brethren ; he did not rate them for their injurious treatment of him ; he was not ashamed of them in the court of Pharaoh. A Christian in honour is in a slippery place ; and in proportion to the height of his post, will find it difficult to keep his heart and his foot to discharge the office and Christianity of his station with a

heavenly and humble mind. Yet again, and this above all,

If you enjoy ease, you are in danger. When you have peace in your dwellings, and health in your bodies ; when the blessings of God surround you, and there is nothing to make you afraid, then the devil will suggest to your hearts, "It is good to be here." There is no state of life so dangerous to a Christian as this ; and that I conceive, among other reasons, is manifest from its being the very state which the heart of man so naturally desires. Yet after all the craving we have for worldly ease, it must be owned that ease is a worldly creature ; and if this state be allowedly the happiest worldly state, it must therefore be most hazardous. I appeal to experience. Christians, when have you found the work of godliness going on most heavily, and yourselves in the most danger of alienation from God ? Hath it been in times of trouble, affliction, distress, or in the days of prosperity, peace and ease ? In the former seasons, you were driven to God. "They cried to the Lord in their trouble : " but in the latter have you not found it hard to hold communion with God ; peculiarly hard to live as pilgrims on earth, to maintain the hope of immortality, to mortify your earthly affections ? Satan is never likely to be more successful, than when we are in the midst of enjoyments of life. When we have our friends about us, and the blessings of heaven above and of the earth beneath are with us ; then the enemy hath us at the greatest advantage to reconcile us to this present world.

In every circumstance, you see there is danger in your ways, ye servants of Jesus ; and I must beseech you not to imagine the wily enemy will not endeavour to avail himself of the advantage your circumstances give him. Your hearts know you have never yet been in any case where he hath not been stirring with them, and too often getting some advantage of you, to the disturbance of your consciences, the hurt, or at least the hindrance, of your souls, and to the dishonour of your Master. You must be prepared, for he is always ready, and your deceitful hearts are too ready always to join him.

5. Wherefore, that you may be kept unspotted from the world, keep with you the hope of salvation. We know that Jesus purchased eternal redemption for those that obey him, and that Christ is in us the hope of glory. Faith looks at Christ as a Saviour ; a complete one in time and eternity. So that where true faith is, the hope of glory must be. Now, if this hope be strong in us, it will preserve our souls in a posture of readiness to receive and oppose all the things that are in the world, whereby the devil would wait to deceive us. The hope of glory will make us patient, and contented in adversity, humble and self-denying in abundance, fearful in advancement, and heavenly in times of quiet and ease. "They desire a better country, that is, an heavenly," saith the apostle ; and what was the consequence ? Why, in the influence thereof, they became examples to us how to "keep ourselves unspotted from the world."

Look to your hearts ; for when are you distressed by afflictions, or puffed up by abundance, or exalted with honour, or softened by ease ? Is it not when the hope of salvation is absent ; when the thought that you have a better country is escaped from your minds ? Then what is it in these cases makes you contented, or humble, or modest, or heavenly, but the hope of glory rising up in your souls ? If we will walk with a religious moderation in all worldly circumstances, and preserve the temper of strangers upon earth, and defeat this wile of the devil against us, we must have glory in our hearts and eyes, as purchased and prepared for us in Jesus Christ. It is a firm belief of the Mediator's satisfaction, and in the merit thereof ; of His being sat down at the right hand of God as our representative, and this dwelling in the heart, that must be our protection against the things of the world. It is said of Stephen, that "he saw the heavens opened, and Jesus sitting at the right hand of God"—Jesus his righteousness and forerunner. In like manner, faith in a risen and exalted Redeemer must open the heavens to our view, and there we must steadfastly behold in the person of our Head, the glory that shall be revealed in us. So doing, how shall we fear the smiles and bear the frowns of the present moment ?

Believers, I beseech you look up to heaven ; consider the hope set before you. Consider the certainty of it : "The forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus ;" yea, He is gone "to prepare a place" for us. Do you believe this ? Then who shall

pluck him thence? Shall death? No; He hath overcome death? He dieth no more. Shall sin? He hath taken away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Shall Satan? He saw him like lightning fall from heaven. Shall angels? They are His servants, sent out by Him to minister to those who are heirs of salvation. Shall the Father? He hath given all things into His hands. Shall time? Time shall be no more; but the throne of God is for ever and ever. And if Jesus cannot be moved, then for whom is He in heaven? For His church; "I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am." "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." "Surely, I come quickly." Consider the glory, as well as the certainty, of this hope. O, my brethren, what is it? Who can say what is the sight, the enjoyment of the blessed God? What the assurance of His everlasting favour, the praises, submissions, services, of a blessed soul, glowing with love and delight towards Him, the presence of Jesus, the company of fellow saints, the possession of a glorified body? Who can say what rivers of pleasure these will be, what fulness of joy; or who can say what an eternity of them? The heart of man cannot conceive these things. O unbelievers, that you will be so much your own enemies! Look to the rotten, unsatisfactory pleasures of the world; and look to those joys above, which are as certain as those earthly things you see. Look and consider; consider you are

mortal men, and may be saints in heaven ; but if not, must be ruined souls in hell.

Believers, look up to heaven, but look up steadfastly. You must keep heaven in your eye. Your eyes must elevate your hearts. A look only occasionally will not mortify your earthly affections, and raise up your hearts to Jesus where he is. Look steadfastly, that is, earnestly, as men do when they are intent upon anything. Look through and through heaven ; discover it plainly ; try to be acquainted with everything there ; look earnestly and constantly too, for that also steadfast looking implies ; it is a keeping the eye upon the object. Let nothing catch away your eyes from heaven ; have it always before you, or if any earthly thing seduces you from it for a moment, return to it instantly again. Look steadfastly to heaven, earnestly and constantly to that within the veil, "whither the Forerunner is for us entered." This will preserve you in a heavenly mind ; this will restrain all the outgoings of your wills after the things of the world ; this, in a word, will prepare you for heaven, and, through the power of Jesus, conduct you thither. I need not say how suitable these reflections are to the solemn transaction before us ;* the feast appointed to strengthen the faith and refresh the spirits of pilgrims, who are going through a dangerous and tempting world towards a better country. May the Spirit be with us in the remem-


* This refers to the Lord's supper, then about to be celebrated.

brance of the Lord; may he open the heavens to our eyes, enabling us to look into them by faith, and see our Jesus at the right hand of God; may he seal comfortably to our hearts our interest in these glorious and eternal things! And may we depart with new vigour to run the race set before us, looking always to Jesus. So bless us, blessed God, for the sake of Jesus! Amen.

SERMON VIII.

EPHESIANS VI. 11.

“Put on the whole armour of GOD, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil.”

HE prince of the power of the air worketh in the children of disobedience,” by continued insinuations made upon their minds from various things of this life.

He worketh in them, keeping their souls in a perpetual pursuit of present ease, pleasure, interest; and so diverts their attention from the concerns of God and their souls. The servants of sin might easily discover this working of their master, yet enemy, would they but attend to what passeth in their thoughts. They might observe that the “imagination of the thoughts of their hearts are only evil continually.” Evil, that is, engrossed in such a manner with the things of the world as implies forgetfulness of God, a want of the duties of reverence, trust, and honour towards him in the soul, and a seeking for happiness and safety in the world, to the dishonour of that God whose countenance

ought to be the only joy, and his arm the only support of his creatures. Yet however dishonourable they may be to God, the hearts of evil men are filled up and captivated by such evil imaginations. Did they remark what passeth within for a single day, they would see that a train of such evil imaginations had entirely possessed them; they would see, that what with the thoughts of interest, care, and advantage; what with the thought of pleasure and indulgence, what with idle thoughts about things they have no concern in, taken up in the intervals of business and pleasure to give the mind a vain employment; what with the thoughts of disappointments past or feared; what with the thoughts of injuries, affronts, slights; what with proud murmurings, suspicions, jealous thoughts, there had been nothing on the imagination during so many hours but worldly, and therefore evil and ungodly imaginations. It is the enemy's business to keep the imagination in full employment; and did any careless person mark the working of his thoughts, he would discover how diligent the prince of darkness is at his work, how artful and secret he is in it, and withal how terribly successful.

Thus he worketh in the children of disobedience; and thus he will try to work in the children of God. That they may be able to oppose him in this work, I am now to call on them,

6. To take to them "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." It is called the sword of the Spirit, because the word is the weapon and instrument the Spirit uses defensively, in "casting

down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." It is also called the sword of the Spirit, because it is the instrument which the Spirit uses offensively in assaulting the kingdom of Satan ; "I have hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth." It is by the word the Spirit makes sinners tremble, and throws dread upon the hearts of Satan and his followers, wherever the gospel is preached. But of this latter use of the word I have spoken already in these discourses. We are now to be instructed in that use which believers ought to make of the word, under the influence of the Spirit, in casting down the imaginations, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Remark beforehand these two things ; first, how effectual this instrument must needs be, since God Himself hath appointed it for the purpose. Take to you "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." When St. Paul said this, he did not speak as a man, but as moved by the Holy Ghost. Wherefore we may, nay we ought, it is our duty, to be confirmed and assured, that in all cases the word of God will effectually help us ; and that with this weapon in our hands, we shall be enabled to hew in pieces all the imaginations which Satan raises against our souls. Our comfort, as well as safety, depends on trusting to this sword of proof, principally because our Lord proved it. In His conflict with Satan, He used this sword of the

Spirit ; all His answer was, " It is written," " It is written," " It is written." And what could Satan say against it ? Could he deny the truth that God had said ? Could he falsify and make it a lie ? He must wrench the word out of our hearts and mouths, before he can impose his falsities upon us. This should be especially noted by all who walk uncomfortably, who are tried with temptations within or afflictions without ; let them take the sword of the word, and lay it home on the imagination whatever it be, and it will assuredly hew it in pieces. " It was too hard for me," saith the psalmist. What ? Why the temptation raised in his mind on seeing the prosperity of the wicked. This was too hard for him ; it pressed sore upon him ; he was almost carried away by it to question God's holiness, and to turn after their example. Well, but what course did he take ? What brought him relief ? Why, he " entered into the sanctuary of God." He took counsel at God's mouth ; then the thing was over. You have, believers, all of you proved the power of the word in like cases ; and yet you will be so foolish and presumptuous as to stand up sometimes against Satan, in the strength of your own reasonings, and forget to put on the sword of the Lord. No wonder then that you are discomfited or discomfited.

Next, I would have you remark, what makes the word effectual to the suppressing all evil imaginations ; and that is, the Spirit. The word is called " the sword of the Spirit." It is in its nature suited to cut asunder and hew down Satan's

devices. But then, as I may say, it sleeps in the scabbard, till the Spirit takes it in hand. The instructions, prohibitions, threatenings, promises, do not act, unless the Spirit puts life into them by His secret and powerful working on the heart. We should pray then, "Lord, open our understandings, that we may understand the Scriptures;" "Lord, increase our faith;" "Lord, grant us the grace of repentance." The design of prayer is, that the Spirit may quicken the word on our hearts. To pray were otherwise needless; for what need to pray, if we could use the word without the Spirit? But now, if it be the Spirit who makes the word effectual, this should be a great encouragement to us to believe that we shall certainly prevail. Imaginations may be high, temptations may be many, and trials incomparably beyond our strength; but what then? If the Spirit takes the sword in hand, or rather if we put the sword into the hand of the Spirit by diligent prayer, the difficulty is over. "My grace is sufficient for thee," is the word of promise in such a case. It must needs be sufficient, since that grace is no less than the working of the mighty Spirit. And we know, yea, all believers have found by experience, that nothing is too hard for God. Here, then, is a great encouragement, that the word is the sword of the Spirit. And here also is great instruction; for if the word be the sword of the Spirit, we may not presume to wield it in our own strength. Satan was very ready with the word to deceive, if it had been possible, even Christ; and we may be expert

in it, too, to deceive ourselves; not to cast down high imaginations, but to set them up. And this we certainly do, unless in the use of the word our dependence be on the Spirit. In all conflicts with Satan we must take the word, but we must trust to the Spirit to be taught, directed, strengthened, comforted, out of it by God. And thus we shall be more than conquerors, and not only foil the adversary, but also gain spiritual advantage by all his attempts against us.

After these two remarks, it is plain enough that no servant of Jesus need fear whatever devices may be raised against him. Satan will be working, but armed with this sword of the Spirit, his devices against us will come to nought. And so I go on to speak more particularly of those reasonings and imaginations within our own hearts, to which we must oppose the word of God. They may be reduced I think, to these two general heads: (1) Imaginations of pride; (2) Imaginations of unbelief.

(1.) Satan will be continually endeavouring to raise up proud imaginations and reasonings in the hearts of believers. He will stir up proud suggestions respecting their gifts and talents, to make them seek their own glory and their own will in the use of them. I do not, because I need not, set about to prove this. It is the plague and the grief of every believer's heart, that such conceited notions will be rising up within him, going before, or following whatever he does. Hath he knowledge? Hath he utterance? Hath he pru-

dence? Is he distinguished by office and employment? Do others own his endowments and attainments? Is he serviceable by reason of his wealth, learning, or skill? Whatever his gift be, the enemy will stir him up to observe it, and value himself upon it; will suggest to him that he is some great thing. Oh, what grief of spirit is this to every pious soul, that the devil and his own nature should be thus striving to rob God of his glory, to make him conceited of himself, as if he had anything which he had not received, and to persuade him to seek vain-glorious ends in the use of what God hath given him! I know not anything which more magnifies the power of God's grace, than the humility of the apostles. To see St. Paul, for instance, working miracles, speaking all manner of tongues, set at the head of so many churches converted by his own ministry, and yet to see him, humble as he was withal, saying always, "Yet I am nothing:" that appears to me the greatest miracle of the whole. And if we will imitate the apostle's example, if we will not be exalted above measure, if we will quench these high imaginations, we must not only be saying, but also be sensible, we are nothing. We must search the word, and ply the Spirit, and walk humbly. The Spirit must effectually teach our hearts what the word teaches, that out of the dust we are taken; and returning to the dust as we are, that our days are but as the remembrance of a guest that tarries but a brief time; that we are the clay, and God is the potter; that if in anything we differ, God hath made the

difference. Meantime, we must especially bear in mind, that we have sadly hid our talents in the earth, or sought our own glory in them, and have a lamentable account to render of our abuse of God's gifts ; that to whom much is given, of him much will be required ; therefore, of all things in the world we have least cause to boast of that which might and would, were there not mercy with God, be signally the cause of our eternal ruin ; in a word, that we are sinful dust and ashes. It is a humbling sense of ourselves, in this manner preserved on our hearts by the Spirit, that can alone repress and confound these lying imaginations rising up in our hearts : for lies they are, and no better, seeing they would persuade us we are something, when we are nothing ; and that praise belongs to us for that which is not our own, but given, or rather lent, to us by God.

Again ; the enemy of souls will be endeavouring to puff us up with conceits of our own righteousness. Though our righteousness be as filthy rags, he will tempt us to believe there may be some righteousness in us ; will congratulate our hearts on the fervency and frequency of our devotions, the extensiveness of our liberality, the strength of our faith, the fervour of our love, the spirituality of our frames, the boldness of our profession, the steadiness of our resolutions. There is nothing, in short, that hath the appearance of religion, whereby he will not seek occasion to beguile us ; while, also, our too vain hearts will not be unwilling to give him credit. The falsity here is exceedingly gross ; and it is truly

marvellous that he can, at any time, deceive us in this way. For the law of God applied to the best thing we can do shows it to be ungodly; plainly convinces us that all our graces and performances come so utterly short of our duty, that we cannot in conscience to our souls but cry for mercy for them. And, therefore, this law of God we must lay home to our hearts and lives, that we may evidently see our great unprofitableness and unrighteousness in everything; and so, humbly sensible of our own vileness, may be always on our guard against these proud and false insinuations. Yea, and the gospel too may well serve to defeat them; for, besides that it declares a righteousness to us, not in ourselves, but in a Redeemer, wherein only we can appear before the holy and pure God, we shall also find ourselves exceedingly short in every evangelical precept, and so be forced to own, on the clearest conviction, that we are nothing.

This is a point of as much importance to our interest in Jesus Christ, as it is to our comfort; and therefore, it must be expected the enemy will be peculiarly busy upon it. For which reason we should use the greatest diligence, by examination and prayer, to obtain the most just, that is, the most lowly views of ourselves. Particularly, we should be careful to humble ourselves for the deficiencies of our best attainments, and so be ready to beat down every high thought into the dust, to the praise of the glory of God's grace, in saving us by a Redeemer; and to the growing content of our souls, by trustin

more fully and entirely in the Lord our righteousness. In like manner, I need not tell believers they will be in danger of being deceived by the enemy, through lying imaginations of their own strength. Without Christ we can do nothing ; the strongest cannot stand a moment ; and it is certain we live by the power of God. "I can do all things," saith the apostle Paul. But how ? "Through Christ strengthening me." Nevertheless, we may be too easily brought to an opinion of our own sufficiency ; that we are so advanced in grace as to be a match for any temptation, and so fall into a kind of security and fearlessness, not seeking strength from above, and failing in the day of trial. The word of God will teach us another lesson, and it will behove us to learn it in the bottom of our hearts. It is this, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God ; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed," in its very nature, "can be ;" for then, it would cease to be the carnal mind. Therefore, it is plain, that if left to ourselves we can do no other than sin, because then the carnal mind must necessarily prevail ; that we cannot of ourselves so much as think a good thought ; and that it is God that worketh in us to will and to do. I say, it will behove us to learn this lesson deeply, if we would not be cheated into an opinion of our own sufficiency. It will behove us to pray always for more distinct views, and more abasing apprehensions, of that helplessness wherein the word of God describes us so continually to be. Otherwise, when we have cherished some fond con-

ceit of our strength, we shall have speedy cause to lament our weakness and a fall together. Look to it, therefore, believers; you cannot pray, you cannot meditate, you cannot hear, cannot exert one act of faith, love, hope, humility—you cannot be patient, resigned, contented, forbearing, forgiving—you cannot resist the least temptation—you cannot save yourselves from the greatest sins, from the very sins you would tremble, with Hazael, at the thought of committing—you can do nothing, bear nothing, resist nothing, if left to yourselves. You know the truth of all this; sad experience hath taught it you, as well as God's word. Believe it then always, and live under the sense of it; so shall Satan ever find you in the hand of Him that is mightier than he.

(2.) Satan will also raise up unbelieving imaginations, such as would call in question God's goodness, and justice, and wisdom, and truth and power. I will mention some of the principal of them. The believer may find imaginations of fear or doubt stirred up in him, to disgrace God's truth and promises. Peter had not come out to Jesus on the water without a permission, and yet when he was in the sea, the wind was stronger than his faith. He cried, "Lord, save, I perish." "Save, Lord;" there was faith; he called on the Lord. "I perish;" that was dishonourable unbelief. Could he perish in the hands of Christ? Believers in him may often think themselves perishing when because they are in the hands of Christ, they cannot be in the least danger. Peter was never so

in his life, than he was the very moment he thought himself sinking. Yet if Satan cannot pluck believers out of Christ's hand, he will attempt to terrify them in it; he will endeavour to raise his storms, and persuade many that their sins are so great, and the time so short, and their provocations so particular, that they are just about to perish. Well, but the sword of the spirit must be applied, the promises must be appealed to, and then, like perishing Peter, they will find themselves safe ashore.

The believer may find murmuring imaginations raised up in him, injurious to the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God. Thus he may murmur at God's commanding will, as if there were somewhat grievous or intolerable in God's law. Such, in part, was the sin of Eve; she thought it hard to be deprived of the use of that tree which was so desirable to make one wise; and such hath been the sin of all her children, more or less. We are extremely apt to think commands impositions, and secretly to wish we might be relieved from the necessity of obeying them. Nay, we have often taken that dispensing power into our own hands. We may murmur at God's distributive will, as did Moses. "Why," said he, "should God lay all the burden of the people on me to bear it alone." We are very ready this way, to be restless under the particular works God hath given us to do in our several callings; but, I beseech you, let us give no attention to such suggestions of Satan, believing we are best where God hath put us: and because he ordereth all things, let us fully be satisfied we could

not be in any other circumstances of life than the present, without greater hazard to our souls. We are similarly tempted in times of affliction. We should give up our will to God's providential dispensations: this, however reasonable, or however much our duty, yet it is likely the devil will not permit it to be done without trying to raise up some secret murmurings at the heart. Too often he succeeds, to the dishonour of God, and the distress of the afflicted.

Finally; the believer may be tried by spiritual weariness, a sort of complaining that things do not succeed to the soul as could be wished; and of mistrust, because there is still so much on the hands. Like Martha, in another case: "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?" She was tired, seems to have been overworked, and to have lost her patience. Just so it is in spiritual things; we are wont to think the work too hard, the time too long, and to lose our patience, falling into a weariness of well-doing; which, if it go no farther, will at last cast a complaining heaviness on our souls and conversation, that will not bring honour to our religion, but lead those who are not acquainted with it to mistake it for that melancholy thing it is not.

Now, all these things are the offspring of unbelief, which Satan carefully stirs up within us; and the remedy for them all is the sword of the Spirit, the word of God. It is the tried sword there is none like it. Take any other sword, sword of your own reason, or that of others,

lay it home as freely as you will, the stroke is but like the falling of a feather. The unbelieving heart feels it not, and Satan blows it away ; but take the sword of the Spirit, lay the word home, and follow your blow, you shall find all these imaginations flying before you. Now, from all this you may learn how much comfort, as well as benefit, the word of God is suited to bring us. I appeal to experience. Did you ever find relief any other way? I know you did not. I beseech you, therefore, to try no other, but search into that ; let all your direction, light, and comfort spring from thence. Let it, therefore, be your delight, and your counselor, and you shall find God will fulfil his word unto his servants wherein he hath caused them to put their trust. May the Lord direct you into the knowledge of all truth, and give you, by patience and comfort of the Scripture, to have hope. To him, Father, Son, and Spirit, one ever-blessed God, be praise and glory in all churches of the saints, now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON IX.

EPHESIANS VI. 11.

“Put on the whole armour of GOD, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil.”

IN speaking of the spiritual war between Christ and Satan, I have both described the methods of the Redeemer, in invading the kingdom of darkness, and also the artifices of Satan on the servants of Christ; concerning which last we have taken into particular consideration those several graces which the believer must oppose to the wiles of the devil, namely, sincerity and holiness, constancy and faith, hope and the word of God; which the apostle calls the Christian armour, as well he might, seeing that a Christian, thus armed, is prepared for all assaults. After this he proceeds to call believers to the practice of that instrumental duty, in the use of which they may be said to “put on” their armour. And this is prayer. It is in the diligent use of prayer that the Spirit quickens all these graces in the soul, keeps it in a posture of readiness, preserves a tenderness of conscience, whereby the first approaches of the enemy are observed,

and maintains a spiritual activity of vigour to oppose them. Wherefore, if you would not faint in your Christian fight ; if you would be supported by the strength of the Lord, and by the power of his might, you must pray. You must needs pray, if you would not be overcome. If you go out in your own strength, how can you stand ? Can a man stand against legions of principalities, and powers, and spiritual wickedness, who also has a treacherous heart in his bosom, ever ready to betray him into them ? You have too often tried your own strength, believers. You know how insufficient you are of yourselves for anything ; and that whenever you have presumed that you were strong enough for Satan, if he hath not led you away captive, yet he hath easily foiled you. "Through Thee we will push down our enemies : through Thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us. For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. But thou hast saved us. Through God we shall do valiantly : for he it is that shall tread down our enemies." This is the only way if we would prosper. We must have the arm of the Lord with us, for "his is the victory." We must needs be convinced of our own weakness. This is a principal point ; and this the pride of our hearts will not easily allow. Yet if we are not persuaded of it, we can never seek to God for help. We must seek to be better acquainted with it. And how shall we learn it ? How, but from God's word and our own experience ? God's word speaks plainly enough of it ; "Not that we are sufficient

of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves ; but our sufficiency is of God." "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." "Without Me," says Christ, "ye can do nothing." Yet, however plain the Scripture, it will profit little if our hearts have not learned the truth and certainty of our weakness, from a knowledge of our corruption. There is a "carnal mind" in man, which is "enmity against God;" a mind of invincible obstinacy, so that we may even as well think of pulling the sun out of the firmament, as of controlling it by our own strength. Have you not found it, believers, and mourned over it? I cannot call any believers who have not. You cannot do the thing that you would; when you would do good evil is present with you. This is your daily lamentation; you cannot regard, love, trust, glorify God as you would. The carnal mind is ever drawing you back, and will not allow you the enlarged desires of your souls; is ever also suggesting some evil thing. No; we cannot do the thing that we would; cannot put on the Christian armour ourselves; cannot resist Satan's wiles by any strength of our own. We have always failed when we have made the attempt. We alone cannot do otherwise than sin; God only is able to keep us from falling. Wherefore we must needs pray for the strength and the might of the Lord; "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," that Satan may not lead us to trust in ourselves. "Watching thereunto with all perseverance," because Satan will be

watching to turn us away from it. And our prayer must be "with supplication for all saints," lest by any jealousies raised in our hearts one against another, Satan may hurt both the cause of Christ and our own souls.

I put these three—prayer, watchfulness, and intercession—together, because the latter two are but qualifications of true Christian prayer; and because it is by prayer only, thus qualified, that we can put on the armour of God, and are enabled to stand against the wiles of the devil. I will speak of these points in the order before us, raising reflections from them as I proceed.

1. The apostle calls on all believers to "pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." Pray: prayer puts on the graces, I said; so it doth, for it is an exercise of them. Now, this supposes they are in the soul. A man cannot use or exercise that he hath not. But though these graces of faith, hope, and the like, be in the soul in habit, yet the believer will find himself unready in the use of them; they will not be at hand when he needs them, unless they are in exercise. Just as a good swordsman, be he ever so expert with his weapon, must be at a loss on the sudden approach of an enemy, if it is not at his side, or he has neglected the exercise of it. He may suffer damage while he runs to take it up, or is not ready through disuse, to put himself in a posture of defence. Now, prayer keeps the graces in exercise, and so puts on the armour. In prayer it is that faith puts on the lively sight of invisible things; that hope

kindles into glowing desires; that sincerity, quickened by the views of Divine love, renews its purpose of pleasing God in all things; that the hunger after holiness gains a keener edge; that constancy gets strength to encounter difficulties; and the soul takes into its hand the sword of the Spirit. Consider it, and you will find prayer is nothing else but an exercise of the graces. Such an exercise, like all other exercises, keeps the soul expert and ready for action, and also increases strength. Here we may see the ground of many complaints. People are weak, easily overset, and are uncomfortable. Is it not because they do not pray so as to have the graces lively and active in the soul? The graces kept in exercise by diligent prayer would remedy all; and while hereby also the habits of them would be strengthened, we should grow up to greater meetness for present service and future glory.

And here, also, you may see the use of prayer; it is not to inform God of anything, or to make him more willing to give us what we want than he was before; but that, by coming to him, we may give him glory by the actings of faith and trust on his mercy, wisdom, and goodness in our souls, to which only he hath respect. And by such exercise of faith and trust, we grow more confirmed in them, and all other graces that flow from them. Therefore, we must pray in the Spirit; that is, our spirits must be employed in this duty through the influence of God's Spirit. If our attention be not upon it, and our graces

exercised and engaged in it, it is no prayer at all. There must be a humble sense of our wants, and a faith in God's promises through Jesus Christ, (and all the other graces follow these,) else the spirit doth not pray. Faith and desire must be acting, else there is no praying: for what is prayer but a lifting up the desires of the heart to God, with a hope of being heard for Christ's sake? Take away these, desire and faith, nothing remains but an unmeaning speaking of words before God.

This may show you the reason why many people say abundance of prayers, and yet are nothing bettered by them, not a whit the more holy. They do not exercise any graces in prayer; do not pray "in the spirit;" and their prayer being no more than a mere bodily exercise, it cannot possibly profit their souls, though they are ever so often employed about it. Men should learn to pray with understanding; to exercise the grace they have in prayer, be it ever so little; so, by God's blessing upon them, it will grow upon them, and they will find their hearts more humble, more believing, more penitent, and themselves daily becoming fitter for the Master's use.

But then, if prayer be an exercise of the graces, all graces should be exercised in it, or, as the apostle says, we must pray with "all prayer and supplication." People will be complaining of the weakness of their graces; that they are little humbled; that their faith, love, hope, and other gracious dispositions are exceedingly weak; perhaps, will be doubting whether they have any such

thing belonging to them : but is not this owing to the want of exercising "all prayer," every part of prayer, and consequently all the graces in prayer ? Faith in Christ is at the bottom of every part of prayer ; but then all these graces which follow on this faith, should be exercised in the several parts of worship. If we would be more penitent, we must confess our sins before the pardoning God ; if we would have more thankfulness, we must speak of the great things he doth for us in Jesus Christ ; if we would have more trust in him, we must open our wants and helplessness before him, imploring his aid ; if we would grow in love to others, we must intercede on their behalf for Jesus's sake. As, therefore, the cause of a general weakness in grace is the not duly exercising it in prayer ; so the same thing is the cause of a particular defect. On examination we shall find, that the particular grace, the weakness of which we complain of, hath not been duly and diligently exercised in prayer.

This will evidently show the need of stated seasons of prayer, and the mistake of any who should imagine they could do without them. By seasons of prayer, I mean times of retirement, wherein we may exercise "all prayer and supplication" ; exercise our graces distinctly and largely in every part of prayer. Stated seasons enable us, particularly and largely, to exercise the graces of humility, faith, hope, love, charity, and, in a word, all the graces that belong to a Christian. "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray : " this

was David's custom ; and I suppose no one doubts this to have been the great means of his attaining to that stature in grace, which was so eminently manifest in him. If there be not stated seasons for this work, the graces must unavoidably languish, and the Christian soon become as little comfortable to himself as serviceable to his Master.

The apostle adds, this prayer must be "always." What ! must we do nothing but pray ? Yes, surely ; we have other duties on our hands besides, which may not be neglected—the duties of our calling, and other religious duties. What the apostle means is, that we must always have our seasons of prayer, and be constant in them, and also that we must take any other occasion that presents. In all we must have a more especial regard to that grace which lacketh, or is called to more particular trial. In a word, we must not be backward or dilatory in the work, but regard it as one of the greatest concerns of our lives, and as the only effectual means whereby we may be enabled so to have the Christian armour about us, as to stand against the wiles of the devil.

On the whole, you see what way the believer must put on his armour ; that is, by a constant exercise in prayer, through the Spirit, of all those graces wherein the Christian armour was said to consist. Now, I beg you to note, as a motive to diligence herein, that Satan is always on the watch ; and if ever he finds us unarmed, and the whole body of our graces, or any one of them, asleep, he will not fail to improve the opportunity to his own triumph, and our shame.

By the way, what can those think of themselves, who have no such stated seasons of prayer; who, instead of praying always, pray not at all? Can they have about them any one Christian grace? Let them show it, if they have. It is easy to know, without asking, who those are that do not pray. Their whole conduct declares it, and demonstrates that their hearts are without the least tincture of faith, or hope, or humility, or charity; and therefore that they do not pray, do not seek God in the only way in which he is to be found, the constant exercise of spiritual worship. Are there any such present? If so, what do you think of yourselves? Are you Christ's servants, or Satan's? Not Christ's soldiers and servants assuredly, for you do not bear his arms. You cannot exercise one grace in prayer; you do not pray; you do not endeavour to do so. If you are not Christ's, you know whose you are. Alas! prayerless generation, there is a time coming when you shall wish you had prayed. You know there is a time when you shall pray to no purpose. "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me. I will laugh at their calamity; I will mock when their fear cometh."

2. The apostle calls on praying believers, to be "watching thereunto with all perseverance." Now, this may mean either of these three things; and in whichever sense it is taken, the rule tends greatly to our putting on the Christian armour.

(1). It may mean a persevering and steady

watchfulness when we find the seasons of prayer interrupted and broken in upon. Business, sleep, company, or forgetfulness, will be apt to steal upon the hours devoted to prayer, so as to make it slighted, if not neglected. I appeal to experience, if there be not need of great watchfulness herein. And when somewhat or other hath stolen away the sacred season, or contracted it into a compass wherein it hath only been done in a hurry, and with the thought that we should be even then otherwise employed, what hath been the consequence? Why, the graces not being exercised, have fallen asleep. We have found ourselves like Samson, when they cut off his hair; and our spiritual enemies, like watchful Philistines, have come upon us, and found us without strength to oppose them. At best, it hath cost us both pain and trouble to recover the vigour of our souls, to get our graces again into any lively exercise, to be armed for the spiritual war. Wherefore, we should look on the hours of devotion as sacred, nor suffer anything but what is very extraordinary, that is, some other immediate duty, to invade them. We should be watchful against the snares that lie in our way to rob us of our spiritual repast and nourishment, whether company, or conversation, or business, or sloth. We should be especially watchful and resolute against that particular thing which is most apt to steal in upon us, and should make it a matter of solemn and conscientious concern not to be interrupted. It will be an unpromising token indeed, if we are content to be hindered;

which must show that if we have any grace in us at all, it cannot but be exceedingly weak.

(2.) "Watching thereunto with all perseverance" may mean a careful watchfulness in the act of prayer; that we be attentive to it and engaged in it. Whoever hath truly prayed at all, must know it is not so easy a thing to be attentive, spiritual, lively in the work; to speak from the very bottom of the heart with importunate desire; to speak as to God, with due humility, reverence, and faith; to be instant and wrestling for the blessing. The sluggishness and stupidity of the flesh, the invasions of worldly, and perhaps profane thoughts, the deadness of our affections, all conspire to make prayer difficult, indeed impracticable, without the immediate influences of the Spirit to help our infirmities. Well, therefore, may we be called upon to watch unto prayer with a steady perseverance; not allowing anything to hinder, or anything to interrupt us: not merely not allowing, but stedfastly opposing, whatever would do so. After all, the best will have their complaints; and what should this do but stir all up to a resolute watchfulness? Because the best complain of disallowed interruptions, we must not therefore allow them. Nothing in the world would be more hazardous, nothing more destructive to the health of our graces, than a slight performance of, and a sluggish manner and frame in, our secret duties. O, fear every approach and appearance of it as th a very death of your souls.

(3.) Again, "watching thereunto wi

perseverance," I suppose principally means, the keeping up a praying frame, when we are not employed in the immediate exercises of prayer. When we pray at stated seasons it is to exercise the graces, to put on the armour; and when it is on, we should endeavour to keep it so; to keep our graces still lively through all the occurrences of the day. Watch thereunto with perseverance; be diligent that nothing quench the holy flame of your souls; be on your guard against everything that is wont to do so; endeavour to do everything with an eye to God, and receive everything, whether comfort or cross, as coming from him. Try to see God in everything, whatever it be; be frequently lifting up your souls to him; call on him and praise him with a growing frequency; cast an eye often forward to the heavenly Jerusalem, and accustom yourselves to raise some pious reflections from everything you meet with. All this is to keep up a holy frame, to watch with perseverance, to walk with God. This will not hinder your worldly concerns; it will quicken you in them, and sanctify them to you. If the main design of prayer be to exercise and to quicken our graces, the end of their being so quickened is, that they may influence us afterwards, make us fit for service, and prepared for temptation in the ordinary transactions of the world. And if so, it is of as much importance, and as much duty, to be diligent to maintain the vigour of them afterwards, as to stir them up in the seasons of prayer. Sure I am, if we forget ourselves as soon as we have done praying, we are but ill-prepared to stand against

the wiles of the devil, whose devices are set in array against us wherever we are, and whatever we are doing. Wherefore, we must needs be earnest to preserve the spirituality of the power of godliness, when we are not in the very acts of prayer.

3. Lastly, St. Paul calls on us to offer up "supplication for all saints." Now, though this should always have a part in our prayers, yet, inasmuch as it hath no immediate regard to the Christian armour, any farther than as it is an excellent means of uniting us in affection and brotherly love to them ; and so of shutting out those jealousies which Satan will be labouring to raise in our hearts against them, I shall no longer dwell upon it, than just to exhort you to the practice of praying for one another, as becometh saints. Look to it, therefore, that your faith in Jesus be fruitful this way ; and in all your approaches to God, remember that you are but members of Christ's body, every part of which is equally dear to him as you. Bear his people with you on your hearts to the throne of grace ; pray away all disgusts against them ; be instant for them all, especially for those known to you, and those who join with you in the solemn assembly. Pray in the charitable frame our Lord teaches ; not *my* Father, but *our* Father which art in heaven. Make supplication for all saints ; and so I conclude with the following words of St. Paul, which I beg leave to apply to myself ; " Praying for me," also, brethren, " that utterance may given unto me, that I may open my mouth bold to make known the mystery of the gospel."

SERMON X.

EPHESIANS VI. 11.

Put on the whole armour of GOD, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil."

IN various discourses I have been setting before you the Christian war ; they are now brought to conclusion. We have been considering the leaders of this most important of wars, Christ and Satan ; the field of action, the world ; the soldiers on one part and the other, men ; the manner of the fight ; with what weapons Christ invades Satan's dominions, and those with which Satan endeavours to defend them ; and also how Satan assaults the followers of Jesus, and Jesus arms them for defence. The last of these circumstances hath been more largely insisted on, as being most effectual to afford you a more distinct view of the reality of this war, and the part every one of you is bearing in it, as you are ranged and drawn up under the one leader or the other. Christ's methods of attacking Satan's dominion in the persons of sinners, and Satan's order of fight to repulse his enemy, and keep his subjects in his hellish peace and power, as well as

Satan's wiles on Christ's kingdom in the persons of believers, with their Leader's disposition of them to defend them against his devices, have been distinctly laid out.

I thought it not advisable to shut up abruptly so great and interesting a subject, and therefore determined to conclude the whole with some suitable remarks and applications. These shall be confined to three general heads.

1. The reality of the war.
2. The present state of it.
3. The importance thereof.

1. I would engage you to mark the reality of this war. And surely I have not been representing an imaginary scene all this while? That there are sinners in the world is evident, as it is also that there are saints. The rise and progress of sin in the world the Scriptures ascribe to Satan ; and whatever there is of holiness among men they attribute to the grace and power of Christ. Also, they teach us to call sinners, " the children of the wicked one." They are said to be " of the devil," who is called their father : " Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." And again, the sinner is called a child of the devil : " O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil." On the other hand, saints are variously called, servants of Christ, disciples, believers, members, and the like, all of which have a plain reference to Christ as their Head and Leader. That there are men good and bad in the world is a notorious fact. The Scripture ranges the bad

under the devil, the good under Christ ; and insists that there is a spiritual war maintaining between these two leaders in the persons of each, while it assures us that Satan is at the head of all sin, and Christ of all holiness. Yea, they go farther, and describe the various methods and arts used on the one side and the other, to gain over such as are joined with the opposite party. They tell us how Satan, the lord and prince of the world, by usurpation, holds dominion over the race of mankind by nature, since man, by a voluntary choice, went over from God to sin. Also, how this tyrant leads on his thoughtless willing subjects in ease, in peace, and security, till the pitiful and compassionate Saviour comes among them, with the sword of God's threatening, denouncing His terror and vengeance to them. Then Satan, for a while at least, can no more charm them with his delusions, and persuade them all is well. They feel the arrow of the Lord sticking in their hearts ; they feel peace no longer in their sins ; they must repent or perish miserably, eternally. Then what can Satan do ? He cannot deny the truth, not easily prevail to make the sinner think God's arm is not able to punish, or that the flames of hell are not terrible. He must yield this point for the present, and try what he can do by delays, by resolutions, by artful insinuations, by company, by cares, either to gain time till the impression and dread languishes, or to make a false peace, crying victory in the conscience of the sinner, yet still holding his heart in possession. If in this he cannot succeed, but the heart-

wounded sinner cries, "What shall I do to be saved?" from the bottom of his soul, will not be put off with any delusions, seeks to God for help day and night, finds his wounds smart more sorely; labours for peace, but can procure none till he hears of the offer of mercy through the blood of Jesus, and closes in with it with all his heart, then Satan loses, and Christ gains a subject. Then the devil hath nothing left him, except by a thousand lying arts to attempt to recover him if he can; if not, to trouble and vex him, and to render him of less service to the Redeemer against his hellish dominion; while Christ, on his part, arms him with directions, and supports him with strength. Such is the scriptural account of the war, which, therefore, must be a great reality, and no vain imagination.

For a proof of its reality, I appeal, my brethren, to your own experience. There is no need to go farther than ourselves, to be satisfied of what has been said. All of you were by nature conceived in sin, and so subjects of Satan, until you were rescued out of his hands. The strong man had possession of you, and you were at peace. Either you were, by the things of life, in profound carelessness and stupidity, or you were made to believe all was well on deceitful foundations. Then all seemed well to you indeed; and, perhaps, it may seem so to some of you to this hour. But the mighty Redeemer came; he spoke to your hearts. As soon as the denunciation reached your souls, you grew apprehensive, or doubtful or terrified, as the conviction of

your danger was manifested with weaker or clearer evidence. Have you not all felt this force of the word, even the very worst of you? Then you were constrained to betake yourselves to some quieting means. You who are yet in unbelief and in your sins, betook yourselves to resolutions, to pleasures, and to company. You would not leave your sins and your master, yet you would be easy. And are you so to this day; are you quiet, easy at the bottom, as if you had never heard of that terrible word damnation, easy as you once were? I hope not; I believe not. Doth not God's arrow stick fast in you? Why else do your thoughts so often trouble you in the night? Why do you thus tremble at the most distant appearance of death? Why doth your courage fail, your spirits shrink within you, your consciences suffer alarm, and your countenances fall, whenever I am describing here before you the awful solemnities of a departing hour, the tremendous procedure of the judgment day, the crack of a dissolving world, and the flames that never shall be quenched? Why are you ready to be angry with me for speaking of these fearful things, if it be not that God's arrow sticks in your heart, and that you have not yet been able perfectly to cure that most gracious wound which the Redeemer hath made in it, for the saving of you from the wrath to come, and rescuing you from the prince of darkness? You have sought peace in your sins, but have you been able to find it? Oh, may you never find it! May the almighty Saviour pierce your souls with deeper terrors;

terrors that shall make you "roar for the very disquietness of your hearts," leave you without a moment's peace, till you break your chains, and flee into the open arms of Jesus and mercy. This is heaven upon earth, and heaven eternal afterwards. May the avengers of blood pursue you, till you flee to the city of refuge, and there abide safely under the protection of the everlasting arm. Thus, since the day of the Lord's powerful dealing with your souls, when he came to set you free from the bondage of Satan, many of you well know that you have sought peace in your sins. But I persuade myself you have not found it, through the forbearance of God lengthening out to you the day of salvation. You must needs own, therefore, the reality of this spiritual war; the might, love and diligence of the Redeemer, and the artifices and devices of Satan, since your own hearts have been so long a time the field of battle, the seat of action, which, alas, you have stood by and observed, as if you were little concerned in it, yielding to Satan, and resisting Christ.

You, too, will own with fear and thankfulness the reality of this war, who have been faithful to the convictions of the Spirit, and by his Divine influence have fled for refuge to the hope set before you. You have found the war vigorously maintained by Christ and Satan, from the first day until now; while, through the power of God supporting and increasing your faith and your hope, you have been enabled to stand hitherto (though with many a faltering and false step) against the

various doubts, fears, and lying imaginations within, and trials and temptations from without, wherewith Satan hath ceaselessly beset you, and yet ceaseth not. You have been thrust at that you might fall; but the Lord was your help. While you seriously review what hath been done for and against your souls, you rejoice with trembling, giving glory to God for all the wonderful things you have seen and proved, each of you crying out with joyful astonishment, "I live by the power of God;" "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

2. Let us next consider the present state of it; and, doubtless, it concerns us to consider it both in a general and in a more particular manner. As to the general state of this war at present, it will afford matter of humbling consideration, and call for both our prayers and endeavours, when we see the number of Christians but a "little flock," as Christ calls them; while the many all over the world are under the bondage of sin, and so the servants of Satan. If "whosoever committeth sin is of the devil," as the word of truth assures us, and common sense consents that so it must be, what a full sway must that usurping tyrant have over the face of the earth, when so many commit sin, living in the practice and love of it? How must this be the case elsewhere, when, in the midst of gospel light, the multitude walk in darkness, doing things utterly contradictory and disgraceful to the gospel; calling themselves Christians, but walking even as the heathen do,

in the vanity of their minds! If drunkenness, or lewdness, or profaneness, or swearing, or cheating, or lying, or hatred, or covetousness, be the mark of a child of the devil, how extensively numerous must his family be! Take out these, and how few remain on the part of Jesus! Also, of such as in the judgment of charity we ought to believe disciples, how many are cold, heartless, unconcerned, as it were, whether their Master or Satan prevail; whether souls live or perish! It is said, when Benhadad came up with the Syrians to fight with Israel, that "the children of Israel pitched before them like two little flocks of kids; but the Syrians filled the country." This surely is but a faint representation of the difference in number between the servants of Christ and Satan. Though it is a distressing reflection, yet it doth not afflict us as it ought. Why do we not cry for the ark of the Lord? why not mourn for the disgrace done to redeeming love? why not pray the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest? The kingdom of Satan stands secure; that cruel monster leads on thousands and tens of thousands in triumph; he sits peaceably on his throne, supported by three pillars—ignorance, pride, and lust. Why, then, do not believers take the sword in hand? The Redeemer hath committed it to them. He waits on their zeal. Why do they not "go up to the help of the Lord against the mighty?" Is every unbeliever a child of the devil, a rebel against God, an enemy to Jesus, and an heir of hell? Where, then, is zeal, piety, and

love? Let every soldier of Jesus look to it; hath he been, is he free from the blood of all men? Oh, let us not any longer think we have nothing to do with the souls of others. If we are Christ's soldiers, we must up to the fight, and every one in his place oppose the works of darkness and the kingdom of the devil. While Providence ministers occasion, and duty calls upon us, we must not leave Satan in peaceful dominion over one soul with whom we have an influence. And influence we have with one and another through friendship, relationship, or dependance, if we had heart to use it.

From a general consideration of the state of this spiritual war at present, let us descend to a more particular inquiry about it. Parents, masters, husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, are those who belong to you, in these relations, servants of Christ, or of Satan? It ought to be a heart-piercing reflection to consider, "This, my wife, my husband, my son, my daughter, my brother, my sister, my servant, is a child of the devil." I am sure there can be no support against it, but from our being able to say, "It is not through fault of me, O Lord."

To come still nearer to ourselves; are we the children of God, or of the devil? I pray you consider this day to whom you belong. If you belong to Christ, you are humble; you see that you are poor miserable sinners, who dare not come before God but with the publican's cry, "God be merciful." You know what it is to eat the flesh

and drink the blood of the Son of Man. Your hearts desire him as your righteousness and strength. If you belong to Satan you are proud, that is, blind and hardened ; you see little of your sins, and feel less of the infinite malignity of them. The majesty, purity, and justice of God, his fearful curse levelled at your head, and all the terrible consequences of sin in the present and eternal world, are hid from your eyes, that you do not see them, and from your hearts, that you feel no deep concern about them. Or, if you be not without some concern for your souls, your own righteousness is your salvation, and your own arm your strength.

If you belong to Christ you live by faith ; that is, your great desire and endeavour is to walk with God always, and to please God in all things ; you seek the things that are above, labouring to keep yourself unspotted from the world, and to live in heart and affection as strangers upon earth. If you belong to Satan you live by sight ; that is, you mind earthly things ; your hearts and affections are upon them ; consequently, you do not mind God, nor desire fervently to please and enjoy him ; but in the bottom of your hearts, whatever appearances there may be to the contrary, you desire to please yourselves, and to enjoy the present world.

If you belong to Christ, you sin not ; which doth not mean that you have no sin in your hearts, or that at no time it prevails against you ; but it means that you have a new principle within you, that is directly set against sin ; that hath freed you

from the service of sin ; that hath made you the servants of God, so that you have much fear of sinning ; and whenever you do sin, be it ever so little, suddenly condemns and makes you smart for it with an inward pain and grief, which nothing but the blood of Jesus, applied to your consciences by a lively acting of faith can assuage. If you belong to Satan you commit sin ; you are under the guidance of your corrupted hearts, and to follow their devices is your daily practice ; whether they carry you out after the less discernible vices of man's esteem, worldly honour, covetousness, idleness, pleasure ; or the more evident ones of drunkenness, lewdness, dishonesty and the like. Your hearts are without watchfulness ; you sin, and fear not, and soon forget it, resting as easy as if that pardon had been granted you sought not for. You fear not temptations, but run into the mouth of danger continually ; yea, into that very temptation by which again and again you have fallen. Thus you commit sin ; and if, as far as you see, it is but one sin you thus commit, yet you are of the devil. If you belong to Christ, you have the spirit of Christ ; especially a zeal for God's glory and man's salvation. Zeal for God will make you bold to walk as Christ walked ; while, like him, you must suffer for bearing witness to the truth, which you will be endeavouring to do in all your conversation, minding his words, and treading in his steps. Love of others will make you patient, condescending, forbearing, meek, forgiving ; will make you rejoice over the good, and pity the bad ; and this with a

tenderness towards the one and the other ; that shall render you ready to do them service. If you belong to Satan you are of that wicked one, as Cain was, who slew his brother. Instead of God's glory, you will be seeking your own worldly ends, your pleasure, your praise, your interest. Instead of loving others, you will each be saying, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Jealousies, envyings, disgusts, will settle in your hearts against all that thwart your aims. Far from mourning over the sins of others, you will have no regret, though by a thousand ways you have drawn them into, or encouraged them in sin ; you will never reflect on your conduct in this view, but always think yourselves at liberty to do as you please, however others may be affected by it. I could easily go into more particulars, but these are fully sufficient.

3. Now let us consider the importance of this war. After what has been just advanced, I suppose we shall regard it with some concern, however important it may be. For it is plain we must every soul of us be on the one part or the other ; and of which, let every man's conscience determine from what hath been said. Hence, if the war be of importance, it must be so for all of us ; and the more important, the more should our concern about it be. Now, the importance of the war appears in two most awful things, which entirely depend on the success of it, namely, God's glory, and our eternal interests.

(1.) God's glory in this world does entirely depend on the success of this war. In the world

to come, indeed, God will amply vindicate his glory, and make the universe know that it has suffered nothing, by all the slights which devils and men have put upon it in this earth. But for the present, the glory of God in the world stands or falls with the success of Christ or Satan. As Christ's kingdom prevails, God is glorified, the apostate creature knows his place, bows before the high God, owns his sovereignty, invited by mercy makes his submission, and God regains his proper station of sole Proprietor and most holy and only wise Governor of the world. To effect this was, and still is, nearest the heart of the Redeemer. "I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work thou gavest me to do; the great work of glorifying thy name. For this I was content to die, and in this cause I was straitened in the ardent desires of my soul, till I had accomplished it on the cross." His prayer was, "Father, glorify thy name;" and the answer he received was the joy of his heart: "I have both glorified, and will also glorify it again." And think you his mind is changed since he is gone to his glory at the right hand of the Father? No; "he is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," his loudest cry still is, "Father, glorify thy name." For this he chiefly exercises his mediatorial power, and to this end attending angels joyfully execute his commission, that by the coming of his kingdom, God's name may be hallowed in the doing of his will by men on earth, as it is done by angels in heaven. On the other hand, as Satan's kingdom

prosper, the rebellion of man against his Maker is maintained, the great end of the Redeemer's atonement is defeated, the desire of his heart is disappointed, God is dishonoured, and Satan triumphs with hellish joy. And say, now, is it not an important thing indeed whether Christ or Satan prevail? O, think of it, you that belong to Christ; and let it stir up every power of your souls to thankfulness and diligence, that in your persons and conduct God is in any measure glorified upon earth. Think of it; God receives no glory upon earth, but from and by such as you. O, humble yourselves before his footstool, and own him to be your God with deeper prostration. Live for the glory of his name; enter more narrowly into the temper and views of Jesus. Be not straitened in the accomplishment of the gracious work he hath given you to do, of glorifying his name. Be subjects yet more faithful, and soldiers yet more valiant, for the Lord Christ. Stand up, let nothing dismay you. It is for the cause of God and Jesus. You will not be able to serve it when you are dead.

You who belong to Satan, think of it. Do you know that in every deed you are fighting against God; conspiring, under Satan, your chief, to attack his throne, and rob him of his glory? Do you verily know what use the prince of darkness makes of you; that day by day he makes use of you to dishonour that blessed Being who gave you your very life; who continues it to you with all the various bounties that attend you in it; who waits

on you with so much patience, not exerting that power he certainly has, instantly to consume you ; who hath his arms even now opened to receive you into them, if you would be prevailed on to return to him ? Know you this, and can you be pleased with it ? What ! do you desire that Satan, rather than God, should govern the world ; that Satan be glorified on earth, and God forgotten ? You daily live this, though you think not of it, nor design it, and though the very thought shocks you. Yes, sinners, day by day you consent that the devil be glorified on earth, and God dishonoured.

(2.) Our eternal interests also depend entirely on the success of the war. Sinners, will you be content to perish ? You belong to Satan now, and do you believe in your very consciences, that Christ will own you for his at the judgment day ? You cannot believe it ; you dare not hope such a thing. No ; you know you shall perish ; your consciences are now telling you, if you die the servants of Satan, you shall certainly inherit his portion. And is that portion desirable, I pray you ? What ! not to see God for ever ? What ! never to taste of the joys of heaven ? What ! to be shut up in utter darkness and unquenchable flames, after the most shameful and most terrible procedure of the judgment day, against your will ? What ! you can surely never deliberately approve of this. And yet you know this will be your portion for ever, if you cleave to Satan. And what objections can you have to make against it ? Is it not reasonable that you perish, if you will have it so ? If you

will be Satan's subjects here, why not his companions hereafter, if you will not hearken to Christ now? Oh, that you would; for, my brethren, he is come to save you from your present slavery and future misery; to make you as happy as mortal men can be in this world, and eternally happy hereafter. Why will you not hear, and leave so bad a master as Satan, and such filthy practices as his devilish works, and become the children of the most high God? I am hoping you will take to heart what I have said; and I am sure your own consciences must bear me witness, that I have advised you to nothing but what is fit and reasonable.

You, too, that belong to Jesus, forget not that your service is in the nearest connexion with your glory. As you follow Christ, and fight under his banner, you may expect to reign with him. You may expect, did I say? Nay, you may be assured of it; for he himself hath said, "Ye which have followed me in the regeneration shall sit on thrones." Look to that hope. You have many trials to contend with while you are here; it will help you through them. Great expectation! Glory, eternal glory, "an eternal weight of glory," "far more exceeding"—exceeding what? All afflictions, all sufferings, all self-denials, yea, all hope, yea, all expectation, yea, all comprehension. "Be faithful unto death," and the Lord will give you the "crown of life." Ye servants and soldiers of Jesus, look to the hope set before you.

